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CASTE IN CHANGING INDIA

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&
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FOREWORD

The spread of education and Western ideas and values, advance of urbanization, industrialization, democracy and forces of modernization have since Independence tended to undermine the traditional role and rigidity of Caste in India and promote social mobility across the Caste barriers. The growing awareness of political and economic rights under the impact of adult franchise and rise in living standards have, on the other hand, lent a new dimension to Caste as a means of securing a share in political and economic gains. The particularistic influence of Caste on political and administrative life has been on the increase in recent years. Recognizing the importance of this newly emerging, positive but fissiparous role of Caste, an attempt has been made by the authors of this short monograph to put together briefly at one place the findings and views of different scholars and authorities on the subject. The account and analysis of the recent developments concerning the transformation of Caste into a hand-maid of interest groups, presented in this study, is intended to help give some integrated and balanced overview of the Caste problem in India in contemporary times. An understanding of the new role of Caste in changing India is vital to the future of democracy and advancement of social justice in this country. It is hoped that this brief study will help provoke some fresh, constructive thinking in the field.

I.I.P.A.,
New Delhi.
March 31, 1965.

J. N. Khosla
Director

INTRODUCTION

The caste system being one of the major social institutions is a constant subject for study among Indian Social Scientists. There are many facets from which caste can be studied. One of the major questions today with regard to the caste system is the effect of modern developments (industrial, political, educational, etc.,) on it. There are two points of view. On the one hand there are those who feel that caste system is in a process of disintegration, on the other there are those who feel that caste is manifesting itself more strongly though in new forms. The present monograph is an attempt to pool the available evidence on both these points of view and to present it in a systematic, coherent and cogent manner. To the extent possible direct quotations have been given, and at times slight changes have been necessary for editorial purposes. This has not limited the authors from presenting their own point of view, for which the Institute is not responsible.

A. P. BARNABAS
SUBHASH C. MEHTA

Indian Institute of Public Administration,
New Delhi.
February 1965.

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I

THE PROBLEM

The earlier studies on Caste were mainly concerned with origins and evolution of the caste system. The recent tendency is to study caste in terms of relations, tensions and integrations—its social dynamics. The Caste today is not merely a subject matter of academic research. It has become a matter of concern for administrators, statesmen and the general public. Commenting on the Indian elections of 1957, Jayaprakash Narayan said that Caste was the only party and ideology which fought the elections. Political ideology or economic programme as such had very little to do with the elections.[1] "Within the new context of political democracy, caste remains a central element of Indian society even while adapting itself to the values and methods of democratic politics. Indeed it has become one of the chief means by which the Indian mass electorate has been attached to the processes of democratic politics."[2]

The modern political ideas of democracy and liberty throw a challenge to the basic principles of the Caste system. The problem is whether a democratic state can co-exist with a society based on caste. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar said, "Take the Hindu social system and examine it from the point of social utility and social justice. It is a religion which is not intended to establish liberty, equality and fraternity. It is a gospel which proclaims the worship of the superman—the Brahmin by the rest of the Hindu Society."[3] Democracy does not exist merely in its formal institutions. It lives really and truly in the life of the people; it is a way of life. It is not only through the representative assemblies that democracy works but in an equally true sense through the social institutions and actions of the citizens. Caste is one of these social institutions which has always exercised a predominant hold on the public and social

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[1] N. Prasad, *The Myth of the Caste System*, 1957, p. 11.

[2] L. I. Rudolph, and S. H. Rudolph, "*The Political Role of India's Caste Associations*", *Pacific Affairs*, March, 1960.

[3] B. R. Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah*, pp. 24-25.

life of the Indian society. "A very peculiar type of social grouping which is found in India is the caste grouping. A student of the Indian society, who fails to closely and carefully study this variety of social grouping will miss the very essence of that society."[4]

After Independence, India has embarked upon huge industrialisation programmes. In the fields of science and technology, India is moving ahead with considerable speed, but her social institutions are still old and antiquated. Barnes, while analysing the American Culture, says, "Classical culture fell because Greek and Roman ideals and institutions—utopian philosophy and imperial politics—got ahead of the limited technology, especially in the realm of transportation. Our culture, on the other hand, is gravely threatened because our machines have moved far beyond our social thinking and institutional patterns."[5]

Indian Society faces almost a similar dilemma. Thinking in terms of caste is so deeply embedded in the minds of the Hindu Society and for that matter the Indian nation that our entire outlook on life and politics is coloured by it. Communalism, factionalism and groupism are only manifestations of this basic evil. "Everyone of the hundreds of sections into which this nation is divided suffers from discrimination and every group practises discrimination against others. In a homogeneous society, the innumerable acts of injustice which happen every day are regarded as individual faults. In our society they become minority grievances."[6] According to Buch, "It (Caste) has given an aristocracy of birth, not of merit. It has rendered free adaptation of individual talent and capacity to particular social work for which it is best fitted impossible. It has stifled initiative, self-confidence and the spirit of enterprise. It prevents the growth of a nationality and the development of a democratic state."[7] Caste erects a powerful barrier against the emotional integration of the people of India. It divides them into

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[4] A. R. Desai, *Rural Sociology in India*, 1959, p. 41.

[5] H. E. Barnes, *Social Institutions*, p. 7.

[6] V. P. Menon, "Dangerous Decades", *The Hindustan Times*, Independence Day Supplement, 14 Aug., 1961.

[7] M. A. Buch, *Rise and Growth of Indian Nationalism*, 1939, p. 23.

numerous small and hierarchically arranged groups and a man's loyalties tend to be absorbed by his immediate group.[8] The caste system not only divides Indians into high-born and low-born, but into regional sub-caste compartments whose members behave as members of their compartments. Each of these 3,000 odd regional sub-castes can be described as an extended joint family. "Beyond this," writes K. M. Panikkar, "the Hindu in practice recognises no society or community. This is the widest social group that the Hindus evolved, the bedrock on which Hindu social organisation is built."[9]

Far from disintegrating under the impact of modern trends in the fields of communications, transportation, education and occupation, caste feeling seems stronger than ever before. "Men discover sooner or later," writes Karl Deutsch, "that they can advance their interests in the competitive game of politics and economics by forming coalitions...coalitions which will depend to a significant degree on social communication and on the culture patterns and personality structure of the participants."[10] With the acquisition of power having now become a living reality in the new democratic set-up, every caste and region wants to acquire the maximum of power. The constitutional provisions guaranteeing specified numbers of government jobs, legislative seats and school admissions to scheduled castes and backward classes have sharpened caste consciousness on an enormous scale. "Since the upper castes often refuse to recognise the achievement of an individual member of a low caste who may, for example, acquire education, the individual invariably concludes that mobility on any significant scale must be a group phenomenon."[11] As there are limited educational facilities, jobs and promotions, every caste group tries to elbow out another for the lion's share in the region. "In any economy of scarcity, envy and acquisitiveness become the dominant emotions and each class, each group, each individual is engaged in

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[8] M. N. Srinivas, "There is a vested interest in Backwardness", *The Statesman*, 9th & 10th October, 1961.

[9] K. M. Panikkar, *Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, 1955, p. 12.

[10] "Growth of Nations", *World Politics*, Jan. 1953, p. 183.

[11] Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 104.

grabbing."[12] It is the economic gain, which is expected to follow the establishment of political power, that motivates caste political rivalries especially when increasing economic opportunities coincide with increased government regulations in economic life. In the pursuit of economic gain, the rising local caste group has a heavy stake in capturing political power. Caste is thus a predominant force in the political behaviour of the Indian society.

There is a growing feeling that not only elections are fought on caste lines and party tickets are allotted on the same basis but also recruitment and promotions are determined on caste criteria. A Caste which is politically strong seems better able to fight successfully for schools, roads, hospitals, electric power and industries in the area in which it is dominant. Every State Cabinet contains members from the main dominant castes, and the Ministers are expected to give due consideration to claims of their respective castes if they wish to continue in power. Indeed in the southern States, we witness the fantastic spectacle of competition to be included in Backward Classes with a strange vested interest developing in being called "backward". The Mysore Backward Classes Committee (1961) noted that the general demand put forward by almost every community was that it was extremely backward and that therefore it should be included in the list of backward classes.

Caste has been able to perform this new role in the political field by developing a new form for political activity, the caste association (Sabha). "Caste associations were already visible in mid-nineteenth century. Over the last forty or fifty years they have proliferated their number and strength, paralleling the growth of political literacy. After Independence, it became increasingly apparent that they would be a central feature of Indian politics for some time to come."[13] Caste provides channels of communication and bases of leadership and organization which enable our rural masses, still submerged in the traditional society and culture to transcend the political illiteracy which would otherwise handicap their ability to

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[12] Asoka Mehta, *Presidential Address, Socialist Party Convention,* Madras, July, 1950.

[13] L. I. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, *op. cit.*

participate in democratic politics. But while on the one hand Caste has helped in educating the masses in India politically, on the other, it also "comes in the way of the growth of a healthy nationalism, which often supplies backward countries with the energy and devotion necessary for rapid development. It also works against development in other ways: it produces hostility between the various segments of our society and lowers efficiency and honesty in the administration and public life."[14] Harrison is also of the same view when he says, "the most powerful centrifugal stresses threatening Indian Unity are unmistakably resident within the Hindu social order. With its complex interaction of centrifugal and centripetal forces, Hindu society may not after all provide the foundation for a unified modern State."[15] With the problem of national integration coming to the forefront the study of Caste has gained new dimensions as caste consciousness along with communal, linguistic and provincial consciousness, is a potent factor of disintegration today. It is from this angle that an attempt has been made in this monograph to study Caste as a political force and its impact on the political affairs of the country. In the process, a reference has been made to the institution of Caste as it exists among various religious groups of the Indian society, analogous institutions in other societies and their impact on political behaviour, recent trends affecting Caste and its manifestation in various ways in modern society.

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[14] M. N. Srinivas, *op. cit.*, The Statesman.
[15] Selig S. Harrison, *op. cit.*

II

ORIGIN AND FEATURES OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

A good deal has been written by way of defining and explaining the complicated and unique institution of Caste. Thus we find, "when status is wholly predetermined, so that men are born to their lot in life without hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste....Caste is a complete barrier to the mobility of class. In principle it involves an absolute and permanent stratification of the community."[1] According to E. A. Gait, "the main characteristics of a caste are the belief in a common origin held by all the members and the possession of the traditional occupation. It may be defined as an endogamous group or collection of such groups bearing a common name, having the same traditional occupation, claiming descent from the same source, and commonly regarded as forming a single homogeneous community."[2]

The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences defines Caste as an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of ethnic group occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with such other divisions.

Risley defines it as a "collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community."[3]

N. K. Dutt[4] refrains from defining Caste, but describes its features : members of a Caste cannot marry outside it; there are similar but less rigid restrictions on eating and drinking with a member of another Caste; there are fixed occupations for many castes; there is some hierarchical gradation of castes, the

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[1] R. M. MacIver, *Society*, pp. 171-172.

[2] E. Gait, Report on the Census of Bengal, quoted by N. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, p. 2.

[3] H. H. Risley, *The People of India*, p. 67.

[4] E. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

best recognised position being that of the Brahmans at the top; birth determines a man's caste for life unless he be expelled for violation of its rules; otherwise transition from one caste to another is not possible; the whole system turns on the prestige of the Brahman.

Hutton sums up comprehensively the extent to which caste rules govern every member of any caste. From the point of view of the individual member of a caste, he says, "the system provides him from birth with a fixed social milieu from which neither wealth nor poverty, success nor disaster can remove him, unless of course he so violates the standards of behaviour laid down by his caste that it spews him forth temporarily or permanently. He is provided in this way with a permanent body of associations which controls almost all his behaviour and contacts. His caste canalizes his choice in marriage, acts as his trade union, his friendly or benefit society, his social club and his orphanage; it takes the place for him of health insurance, and if need be provides for his funeral. It frequently determines his occupation, often positively, for in many castes the occupational tradition is very strong indeed, commonly negatively, since there are many pursuits, at any rate, in the case of all but the lowest castes, which he cannot follow, or can follow only at the cost of ex-communication from the society to which he belongs. It must often happen that membership of a caste will take the place of attachment to a political party, since in such cases as disputes between castes of the Right Hand and of the Left, his views on the merits of a dispute and the side he is to support are predetermined for him by his caste membership."[5]

Origin of Caste

"Seeking social origin is a particularly unproductive type of endeavour....A social order does not originate, it evolves."[6] There are many theories of the origin of Caste. The earlier European observers like Abbe Dubois regarded it as an artificial creation, as a device of a clever priesthood for the permanent division and subjection of the masses. It was regarded as the ingenious device of Brahmans, made by and for them. "But

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[5] J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 1951, p. 111.

[6] O. C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race*, p. 83-84.

it is impossible to accept such a view. So deeply rooted and pervasive a social institution as the Caste system could hardly have been imposed by an administrative measure."[7] The most common story is based on the Divine Theory that the castes issued from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of Brahma.

Sir Herbert Risley has been the most ardent exponent of the racial theory of Caste. On the basis of racial hypotheses he wrote his book, "The People of India". He regards caste system as primarily due to colour differences and to a system of hypergamy resulting therefrom. Risley comes out with his final statement: "It is scarcely a paradox to lay down as a law of caste organisation in Eastern India that a man's status varies in inverse ratio to the width of his nose."[8]

Prof. N. K. Dutt[9] and Dr. Ghurye[10] likewise regard Caste as having arisen largely as a result of racial differences. Indeed, Risley's test of the nasal index as indicative of the position of a caste in the social scale has been regarded by Ghurye as holding good in a broad sense for northern India. He emphasizes in particular the factor of priestly manipulation by Brahmans attempting to maintain the purity of race of Aryan invaders. But according to Hutton, "one cannot but believe that for priestly interference of this kind to be effective in setting up so far-reaching and complicated a system as that of Caste, it is necessary to assume the pre-existence of certain of the essential factors in that system which would predispose the population generally to accept an extension of them. Colour prejudice and racial exclusiveness have been common enough in the history of the world, but they have nowhere else led to such an institution as Caste, and it would be rash to suppose that they could have done so in India of themselves."[11]

A more coherent and developed theory of Caste has been put forward by John C. Nesfield.[12] He has discussed Caste from

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[7] J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 1951, p. 169.

[8] H. Risley, "The Tribes and Castes of Bengal" quoted by N. Prasad in *The Myth of Caste System*, 1957, p. 26.

[9] *Origin and Growth of Caste in India.*

[10] *Caste and Race in India.*

[11] J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 1951, p. 174.

[12] *Brief View of the Caste System of the North-West Provinces and Oudh, 1885.*

the occupational point of view. Nesfield emphasizes the fact that artisans working in metals rank higher than basket-makers and other primitive callings which do not involve the use of metals. He is of the opinion that priesthood was not, in the beginning at least, an exclusive monopoly of the Brahmans. Even Kshatriyas could be priests when sacrifices were performed. After a long time, when sacrifices with their hymns and rituals became more and more complex, specialisation was necessary. The section of the people who specialized in this occupation became the Brahmans. Since sacrifices were very important in the social life, the Brahmans became the most important and respected people in the society. Later on the tendency was for the priesthood to become hereditary. When the Brahmans organised themselves as an exclusive privileged class, other classes in the community, by way of precaution for the sake of self-defence and privileges, organised themselves into different Castes.

There is yet another section of scholars who believe that tribalism is responsible for the development of caste system. "Savage nations are sub-divided into an infinity of tribes which, bearing a cruel hatred towards each other, form no intermarriages, even when their language springs from the same root and only a small arm of a river or a group of hills, separates their habitations."[13] According to this theory caste system must have been developed when the Aryans were in the tribal stage. Dr. Gaultherus H. Mees has developed a Varna theory of Castes based upon the idea of a morally stratified society. "Caste or class differences, in East and West equally, were at first based on merit and usefulness, and later tended to become hereditary and economic."[14] Man's Varna, according to Mees, is his natural and right position in society.

A theory of the origin of Caste which combines both functional and racial origins has been put forward by Slater.[15] He suggests that Caste arose in India before the Aryan invasion as a result of occupations becoming hereditary and marriages being arranged by parents within the society of the common craft because trade

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[13] E. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, Vol. II, p. 66.
[14] *The Hindustan Review*, April, 1937, p. 652.
[15] G. Slater, *The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture.*

secrets could thus be preserved. These are thus the various theories of the origin of the Caste system. There is no doubt that the Indian Caste system represents a confusion of all manner of distinctions which reflect occupational difference, racial and ethnic differences, cultural differences, etc. Probably for this reason there are so many theories on the origin of the Caste system in India—some seeking its roots primarily in the racial and ethnic differences, some in the socio-spiritual evolution of the tribal characteristics of India in ancient times, some only in the occupational differences, some merely in the spiritual beliefs of the pre-Aryans and Aryans in India and so forth. It is likely that several factors working jointly led in course of time to the emergence of the Indian Caste system, its social, economic and ideological facets being specifically influenced by several factors. Such a discussion is, however, beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say that the material needs of the society at a certain stage of its development led to the emergence of this institution, while it was stabilised by the ideological basis of society prevailing at that time.

Features of the Caste System

Before we discuss the recent trends which have brought about certain changes in the Caste system, it would be necessary to understand the various features of the Caste system and analyse whether any of them are changing. Hutton[16] holds that normally Caste conforms to the following criteria :

(*i*) A caste is endogamous.

(*ii*) There are restrictions on commensuality between members of different castes.

(*iii*) There is a hierarchical grading of castes, the best recognised position being that of the Brahman at the top.

(*iv*) In various kinds of contacts, especially those concerned with food, sex and ritual, a member of a high caste is liable to be polluted by either direct or indirect contact with a member of a low caste.

(*v*) Castes are very commonly associated with a traditional occupation.

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[16] *Caste in India*, 1951.

(*vi*) A man's status is determined by the circumstances of his birth, (i.e. the caste in which he is born) unless he is expelled from his caste for some ritual offence.

(*vii*) The system as a whole is always focussed around the prestige accorded to the Brahmins.

According to Ghurye,[17] the outstanding features of Hindu society when it was ruled by the social philosophy of Caste, unaffected by the modern ideas of rights and duties, may be discerned to be six :

(1) Segmental division of Society;

(2) Hierarchy;

(3) Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse;

(4) Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections;

(5) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation; and

(6) Restrictions on marriage.

A. P. Barnabas[18] enumerates the following as important features of the caste system :

Restrictions of Food—There are minute rules as to what sort of food should be taken and with what castes. There is an elaborate code as to what castes can eat with what castes, Kachha food and Pucca food. Similarly rules exist regarding drinking of water. In certain parts of the country, Brahmins will not take even water from other castes. There are even restrictions as to what can be eaten; certain castes are forbidden to eat meat, onion, garlic, beet root, etc.

Restrictions on Marriages—Most of the castes are further divided into a number of sub-castes, everyone of which forbids its members to marry persons from outside it. This is one of the most dominant aspects, particularly of the sub-caste. The usual punishment for those who break this rule of endogamy is expulsion from the caste, i.e., social ostracism.

Other Restrictions—In Uttar Pradesh, the highest caste in the village will occupy the central part of the village. The next in rank will be in the immediate neighbourhood and the untouch-

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[17] *Caste and Class in India*, 1957, p. 1-27.

[18] "Caste in Transition—Religion and Society", *Bulletin of the Christian Inst. for the Study of Religion and Society*, Volume V, Number 3, Sept. 1958.

ables are outside the main village. There are restrictions as to what type of vessels, clothes and jewellery should be used by those various castes. Further, there are definite forms in which the lower castes have to address the higher castes.

Exclusiveness—As a result of the restrictions, the Castes tend to become exclusive. According to Ghurye,[19] "As I envisage the situation and as the analysis of caste under British rule must make it clear, the problem of caste arises mainly out of caste-patriotism. It is the spirit of caste-patriotism which engenders opposition to other castes, and creates an unhealthy atmosphere for the full growth of national consciousness. It is this caste-patriotism that we have to fight against and totally uproot."

Hereditary Occupation—Every caste tends to regard some occupation as its own exclusive calling and tries to prevent others from engaging in the same occupation.

Hierarchy—Some sort of hierarchy is present in every society but what makes the caste system different is that the status of the individual is fixed at birth and to some extent related to the occupation. The restrictions of marriage, dining and of occupation are the consequences of the desire to maintain the social precedence.

Authority—In every caste there exists within it an organization with varying degree of power, which compels obedience of the caste-members. These organizations are called Caste Panchayats. Each sub-caste and at times even sub-section of it tends to have a Panchayat of its own.

Segmental Division of Society—Each caste lives for itself and in itself. The loyalty of the caste members does not go beyond the caste. The caste system thus divides society into segments which according to Panikkar, "render the development of any common social feeling impossible. In fact it is the negation of the idea of society." [20]

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[19] *Caste and Class in India*, 1957, p. 222.

[20] *Hindu Society at Cross-roads*, 1955.

III

CASTEISM : SOME RECENT TRENDS

The main features of caste system have been described in the previous section. To analyse if any changes are taking place it would be necessary to see whether the features described are still relevant.

Diametrically opposite opinions have been expressed on the future of caste system in India. There is a feeling, particularly among the westernised section of the Indian Society, that the system is on the wane and it is just a matter of time before we bury it. On the other hand there is a section which tries to draw attention to the fact that caste and casteism are still dominant forces. To evaluate the two opinions, it is necessary to study the factors which are influencing the caste system and to find out the extent to which these factors have succeeded in bringing about changes in the features of the system which have already been mentioned.

(1) *Promulgation of the Constitution*

The Democratic Republican Constitution in India was promulgated on the 26th January, 1950. Its very Preamble solemnly asserts that the people of India have constituted themselves into a Sovereign Democratic Republic to secure to all its citizens Justice, Liberty and Equality and to promote Fraternity. Justice is specifically described to be of three types, not only political, but economic and social as well. Equality is of not only opportunity but also of status. Justice and Equality, thus defined, between them cut the very roots of caste.

The fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution are those of Equality, Freedom, Non-exploitation, Freedom of Religion, Culture and Education, Property and Constitutional remedies. Of these, for the purpose of the present study, the right to Equality is particularly significant. Article 15 of the Constitution states: (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of caste; (2) No citizen shall, on the ground of caste, be subject to restriction regarding access to

or use of shops, restaurants and public wells and tanks; and (3) The practice of untouchability is forbidden.

The right to Freedom guarantees, among other things, practice of any lawful calling without restriction. The right to Non-exploitation guarantees freedom from 'begar' and such other forms of forced labour.

The Constitution may thus be said to have abolished caste and its lingering restrictive and coercive practices and on the positive side to have proclaimed the creation of a society in which inequality of status does not exist.

(2) *Other Political Factors*

While on the one hand Constitution has abolished caste, on the other hand certain factors have emerged as a direct result of the Constitution influencing the caste structure. Acceptance of the democratic form of government naturally implies adult franchise. "The result of adult franchise has been that many social groups have become aware of their strength and realize that they are in a position to wield power."[1]

In the modern system all castes which are large enough to make their strength felt are corporate political bodies. "From all over India there is evidence that castes, organised to the width of the linguistic region, are politically active and courted by political parties."[2] Bailey is also of the same view when he says, "One caste has direct control over economic resources and it alone has a corporate political existence; the other castes derive their living by a dependent relationship upon the dominant caste, and in themselves they have no corporate political existence. Their political relationships are as individual clients of a master in the dominant caste."[3]

Another political factor influencing caste in India has been the lack of organised special interest groups. Only a small fraction of peasants and workers are yet organised. To some extent professional and commercial interests are also organised.

[1] A. P. Barnabas, "Caste in Transition," *Religion & Society*, Vol. V, No. 3, September, 1958.

[2] M. N. Srinivas, "Caste in Modern India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, 1957.

[3] *Tribe, Caste and Nation*, 1960, p. 358.

As many potential political elements are not organised, an element of latency in the politics is created. The result is that unorganised and generally inarticulate segments may suddenly find ways of expressing themselves."[4] Thus there are few outside loyalties to temper the intensity of caste membership. The gradual adoption of the system of democratic decentralization has also given fillip to the caste consciousness at the village level. Each caste has become conscious of the power it can wield. The members vote on various issues not from the viewpoint of the total community but of exclusive caste interests. However, the establishment of the Panchayats has helped to bring representatives of all castes together in one organisation which ultimately may help in developing a sense of community.

(3) *Humanitarian Approach Towards Untouchables*

Another recent trend affecting caste has been the gradual acceptance of the principle of social justice towards the hitherto called untouchables (Harijans). The Constitution lays down as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy that "the State shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people...and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

There is no doubt that untouchability is the worst feature of the caste System. "If the caste system had not developed it (untouchability), there may have been many more who would have upheld the system."[5] Untouchability has been abolished by law. The Untouchability Act passed by the Union Government is applicable to all States. "No doubt, legislation alone does not change society and social laws affecting the caste system should be viewed at best as no more than the definition of ultimate objectives to be achieved but nevertheless they do indicate the goals to which we are trying to move. In spite of the laws,

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[4] Weiner, Myron, "Some Hypothesis of the Political of Modernization in India," *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, (Ed.) Park & Tinker.

[5] A. P. Barnabas, "Caste in Transition", *Religion & Society* V O l. v. No. 3 Sept., 1958.

the practices continue. 'Social' reformation is voted more often for convenience rather than from conviction."[6]

(4) *Economic Development*

It is argued that urbanism and industrialism will give a death-knell to caste system. "If industrialisation proceeds rapidly in that nation (India) the caste system will have essentially disappeared by the end of this century."[7] As Dr. Radha Kamal Mukherjee has pointed out, "In the markets, factories, tea shops, all sorts of castes work and eat together defying the ancient restrictions of commensuality and exclusive living."[8] It is a fact that "modern factory organisation cannot be efficiently geared into the caste system."[9]

Increasing efforts for the economic development of the country have also led to the development of transport and communications which tend to minimise the rigidity of the caste system. "In trains and buses, in cities and factories, in hostels, cinema halls and clubs, people are thrown together irrespective of caste.[10] According to Bailey, "there is no untouchability on trains because no one knows who are the untouchable travellers. Caste in its traditional form can only flower in small-scale societies, and in the absence of extensive spatial mobility."[11] The traditional caste system, with its usages of pollution and avoidance, can, as Dr. Marriott says, only be conceived of as working in "small packages".[12] Another factor which is weakening the caste system is the coming into being of new types of occupations due to industrialisation which were not in the caste hierarchy. Apart from this any individual can enter the professions like medicine, engineering, law, etc. Recruitment to the Defence Services has been opened to all and no distinction can be made between "martial" and "non-martial" races. Similarly other public offices are open equally to all Indian citizens

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] K. Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, p. 126.

[8] *Caste and Social Change in India*, 1937, p. 386.

[9] O. C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race*, 1948, p. 30,

[10] A. P. Barnabas, "Caste in Transition", *Religion and Society*, Vol. V, No. 3, September, 1958.

[11] F. G. Bailey, *Tribe, Caste and Nation*, 1960, p. 191.

[12] MacKim Marriott, *Village India* (Ed.) 1955, p. 191.

except for certain reservations for members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes to which we shall revert later. The extent to which there has been change of occupations can be seen from the census of 1951 which reported that of the 5.13 crores of scheduled castes, only 64 lakhs were engaged in occupations that could be described as those, reserved for untouchables. The census of 1961 also confirms this reading. Dr. Radha Kamal Mukherjee writes, "The dynamics of caste change has both economic and social aspects. The economic aspect is related to the change in occupational specialization of castes and the social aspect concerns with the adoption of higher caste customs, giving up of polluting professions, etc. The changes in these two aspects provide the background of change in the caste system."[13]

There is a section which feels that economic development has in some ways increased the solidarity and resilience of caste. "The development of communications, together with the growth of publication has widened the range as well as the all-India solidarity of caste through the growth of Caste newspapers, journals and conferences. Even the motor car drivers now form a new sub-caste."[14] Srinivas[15] is of the op'n:on that while on the one hand railways and factories relaxed rules of pollution regarding eating and drinking and other forms of contact, on the other, the availability of cheap paper enabled caste disputes to be recorded, and this gave permanent form to rules and precedents which were till then dependent upon the fallible, therefore, challengeable memory of the elders. He further adds that several castes in Gujarat even have had their constitutions printed. That economic development has influenced the caste structure of Indian society cannot be disputed.

(5) *Increase in Education*

The spread of education always leaves a formidable impression on the social institutions of the community. Professor Kuppuswamy studied the attitude of students in South India

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[13] R. K. Mukherjee, *Caste and Social Change in India*, 1937, p. 14.

[14] John Healey, "Caste and Economic Development in India", *Religion and Society*, Vol. V, No. 3, Sept. '58.

[15] M. N. Srinivas, "Caste in Modern India", *Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. XVI, No. 4. 1957.

and commented: "Probably a large amount of antipathy between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins may be due to this high degree of intolerance to the caste system in the non-Brahmin youth which may be really directed against the Brahmin community as much as against the abstract caste system itself. A large proportion of them assert that they look upon the caste system as intolerable and are prepared to abolish it. This opinion is reflected consistently with respect to three important problems of marriage, dining, and the letting of house. Most of them are also non-conformists in matters of religious practice.[16] No doubt, increasing education has weakened the caste prejudices in India, nevertheless its effects cannot be exaggerated. "The educated may have taken a good part of their life and activities outside the sphere of caste. But they still keep the more intimate core of their social life within caste. One needs only to turn to matrimonial advertisements, where doctors, engineers, higher Government officials, foreign-returned, all indicate their caste and require brides of the same castes. Even the 'highly cultured' and 'educated' brides want bridegrooms within their own caste. There are exceptions, to be sure, but they are few and far between. Two classmates of different castes may eat together in a hotel but will not usually be able to eat in each other's house."[17]

(6) *Sanskritisation and Westernisation*

To denote another trend, Prof. M. N. Srinivas recently introduced the concepts of Sanskritisation and Westernisation in the study of Caste dynamics. According to him, "The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by sanskritising its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by

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[16] Quoted by G. Murphy, *In the Minds of Men*, p. 108-109; also *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 42, 1956, p. 169-206.

[17] A. P. Barnabas, "Caste in Transition", *Religion and Society*—Vol. V, No. 3, September, 1958.

a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called sanskritisation...."[18] The rigid division of Hindu society into various castes has in a sense accelerated this process because in any hierarchical system, there is always a tendency to imitate the customs, habits and manners of the dominant group. "It is possible that the very ban on the adoption of the Brahmanical way of life by the lower castes, had exactly the opposite effect. The forbidden fruit was the tastier one."[19] Among the customs taken over are clothing, jewellery, cooking, vegetarianism, teetotalism, and at times the changing of the name of the caste. The non-Brahmins not only adopt the Brahmanical rites and customs but also the institutions. Srinivas corroborates this by referring to marriage, position of women, and kinship. "Among Hindus there is preference for virginity in brides, chastity in wives, and continence in widows. This is especially marked among the highest castes. The lower castes have not been very rigid in their sex code, but as the Castes rise in the hierarchy, it becomes more and more sanskritised and, in sex and marriage, the code of the Brahmins is taken over. Widow remarriage, and divorce are restricted."[20] By westernisation, Prof. Srinivas means the acceptance of western cultural ethos and ideas by the upper caste Hindus and attempt by them to accept, adopt or imitate the British customs and habits. Because of a literary tradition, the upper castes had an initial advantage in taking to western education. "The form and pace of westernisation in India varied from one region to another and from one section of the population to another. For instance, one group of people became westernised in their dress, diet, manner, speech, sports and the gadgets they used, while another acquired western science, knowledge and literature while remaining relatively free from westernisation in externals."[21]

The process of westernization resulted in increasing the social distance between the upper castes and lower castes

[18] Aiyappan and Balaratnam, *Society in India*, 1956, p. 73.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[20] A. P. Barnabas, "Sanskritisation", *The Economic Weekly*, April, 15, 1961.

[21] M. N. Srinivas, *Society in India*, Aiyappan and Balaratnam (Ed.) 1956, p. 84.

and brought the former closer to the British rulers which in turn enabled them to acquire political and economic advantage. "As the Brahmins were at the top of social hierarchy, it was easy for them to do things without being subject to ridicule. Any attempt by the lower castes to do the same would have been ridiculed."[22]

The discussion that emerges out of these two concepts is that the Hindu Society is divided, broadly speaking into two or three categories—the upper castes, the middle castes and the lower castes. Each category has a value system of its own. The value system of an upper caste has enormous amount of prestige in the eyes of the lower castes. Every caste wants to raise its social position. "When the members of a low caste grow rich, they want to sanskritise their way of life. They give up customs and habits which are considered 'inferior'. To put it more precisely, they give up eating beef and pork, and drinking toddy. They take up Brahmanical ritual and customs and even change the name of the caste. In the course of two or three generations such a caste lays claim to a higher position in society."[23] The lower castes are trying to sanskritise while the upper castes are westernising themselves. When the sanskritisation of the lower caste is complete, it tries to westernise itself. "It may take, let us say, two generations for a lower caste to sanskritise and then another two generations for it to westernise; that is to say, in the course of four to six generations, a caste, if it is lucky, can go up from the bottom to the top in the caste hierarchy."[24]

(7) *Shift in the Criteria for Aid*

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the Government of India and the State Governments have been giving preferential treatment in matters of recruitment, education etc. to certain lower castes to bring them gradually in level with other well-placed castes. "The purpose of these measures was to upgrade the lower castes, instead they sometimes seem to

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[22] A. P. Barnabas, "Sanskritization", *The Economic Weekly*, April 15, 1961.

[23] M. N. Srinivas, "Sanskritization and Westernization", Aiyappan, A, and Balaratnam, L. K. (Ed.) *Society in India*, pp. 91.

[24] N. Prasad, *The Myth of Caste System*, 1957, p. 242.

have down-graded the higher ones. Instead of the Harijan becoming a Brahmin, the Brahmin is becoming a Harijan."[25] According to Srinivas, "backwardness and forwardness do not go by caste in modern India—at least not any longer. The tendency to continue to think in terms of backward and forward castes is producing new tensions and difficulties which may become more intractable in the future....The country's hope lies in accepting rational criteria of backwardness and in abandoning the tendency to categorise hereditary groups as backward or forward."[26] He further says, "an individual's backwardness can be determined by reference to his father's (guardian's) income, educational level and place of residence (rural or urban); when an applicant's father has a small income, a lower level of education, and is residing in a village, it means that the applicant is backward, he be Harijan, Rajput, Bania or Brahmin. It is necessary to give weightage to one more factor. The children of a parent doing manual work should be regarded as backward as compared with those of a parent doing non-manual work. Unskilled manual work should be regarded as more backward than skilled manual work."[27] When these criteria are considered together, they will give a true index of the backwardness of an individual. No doubt, the policy pursued by the Government of India of giving preferential treatment to the low castes is in accordance with its humanitarian sentiments, but it also has the effect of making the lower castes look up to the Government for protection. It drives a wedge between the higher and the lower castes. Smt. Hansa Mehta expressed the new point aptly in January 1957 when she said, "The premium placed on caste handicaps is leading not only to unwarranted group jealousies but also indirectly to perpetuation of the caste system. We have to consider whether it would not be wiser to give aid on the basis of a particular caste or tribe. This will eliminate those people who nominally belong to backward class but virtually have attain-

[25] S. P. Adinarayan, "Caste in India: A Psychological Approach", *Religion and Society*, Vol. V, No. 3, September, 1958.

[26] M. N. Srinivas, "There is Vested Interest in Backwardness", *The Statesman*, October 9, 1961.

[27] M. N. Srinivas, "Origins of Backward Classes Movement in India", *The Statesman* October 10, 1961.

ed a social and economic status that would not entitle them to additional safeguards and privileges."[28]

These are some of the important factors affecting caste system in modern India. It appears that regardless of the many factors which are supposed to be disrupting the system, it has withstood all the onslaughts and is still a strong and tenacious force. To believe that the demon of caste is about to die and all that is needed is to prepare for the funeral rites is to grossly underestimate the social forces that bind a caste group together and perpetuate casteism. Prof. Srinivas, taking an optimistic view, observes, "On a short term basis the country is more likely to have more trouble with caste while on a long term basis, adult franchise, the industrial revolution which our Five Year Plans are hoping to bring about, the spread of literacy and higher education among the lower castes, the legal rights given to Harijans, the privileges given to backward castes, and greater sanskritisation of the way of life of the latter, should remove the obnoxious features of the caste system gradually."[29]

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[28] Lelah, Dusklin, "Future of Special Treatment", *The Economic Weekly*, November 18, 1961.

[29] Report on the Seminar on Casteism and Removal of Untouchability, *Indian Conference of Social Work*, 1955.

IV

CASTE IN NON-HINDU INDIAN COMMUNITIES

Caste system is not confined only to the Hindus. The social organisation of the majority Community will naturally influence the life patterns of other communities. Moreover, most of the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs in India originally belonged to the Hindu stocks. "The mere shift in religious allegiance would hardly incur a complete change in social life."[1] Such persons, says Gait, not only remain in their original social group but also preserve most of the restrictions on social intercourse, intermarriage and the like, which they observed when still Hindus.[2] Therefore, social organizations of almost all the communities in India have been shaped and patterned with certain variations, on the basis of Hindu social system. "In India, the social rites and customs vary not from religion to religion but from region to region. The 'give and take' between the majority and the minority communities is always going on, with the result that there are many cultural traits which are neither cent per cent Hindu nor Muslim nor Christian. Such cultural traits can be termed as Indian cultural traits. Caste is one such cultural trait or norm. It is everywhere and all-pervading in India."[3] All important religious communities like the Muslims, the Christians and the Sikhs have some sort of a caste structure.

Caste and the Muslims

According to Ram Krishna Mukherjee, "though caste is unknown to the Muhammadan religion, it exists in full force amongst many of the Muhammadans of Upper India, and in all parts of the country amongst the functional groups that form the lower strata of the community. The other Indian Muhammadans, though they do not recognise caste, have, nevertheless, been so far influenced by the example of their Hindu neighbours

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[1] K. Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, p. 164.

[2] E. A. Gait, "Caste", *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edited by James Hastings and John Selbie, 1911, p. 238.

[3] N. Prasad, *The Myth of the Caste System*, 1957, pp. 207-6.

that they have become far more particular about their matrimonial alliances, than are their co-religionists elsewhere."[4] Islam in its orthodox form does not permit the differentiation of its followers into castes. All the Muslims, in theory at least, are brethren and can get together and there is nothing to prevent marriage with outsiders. But among the class of Muslim converts from Hindus the laws of endogamy and exogamy still have force and the rules which prohibit eating or drinking with stranger to the group are generally observed. The conventional division of Indian Muhammadans is into four groups: Shaikh, Saiad, Mughal and Pathan. Talking about Saiad and Shaikh, Gait says, "the former term is appropriated freely by Muhammadans of any class who have acquired wealth and a good social position while the latter is often used indiscriminately by all local converts to Muhammadanism and the majority of Indian Muhammadans are of this category...."[5]

The Muslims themselves recognise two main social divisions corresponding roughly to the Hindu distinction of interior and exterior castes. "In Bengal, for example, it has been said that there are two main social divisions, Ashraf and Ajlab. The first meaning "noble" includes descendants of foreign Muslims and converts from higher Hindu castes. The second meaning "wretches" embraces all other Muhammadans, including the functional groups and the low rank converts, such as Momins, Mansooris, Rayeens, Ibrahims, etc., which constitute the bulk of Muslim population in India. Like the upper caste Hindus the Ashrafs consider it degrading to do menial service or to handle the plough. The traditional occupation of the Saiads is priesthood, while the Mughals, Mullicks and Pathans correspond to Kshatriyas of the Hindu Society. In some places, a third caste, called Arzal or "lowest of all" is added. It consists of the very lowest castes, such as Halalkhore, Lalbegi, Abdal and Bediyu, with whom no other Muslim would associate, and who are forbidden to enter the mosque or to use the public burial ground."[6]

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[4] *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, 1957, p. 123.

[5] E. A. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

[6] E. A. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

The functional groups among Muslims have Panchayats which manage their affairs, and which, in many parts, exercise almost as rigorous a control as the managing body of a Hindu Caste. Amongst the social offences of which they take cognizance are the eating of forbidden food, adultery, divorcing a wife without a due cause, making a false accusation against a caste-fellow, and marrying persons not belonging to the group. Thus we find that pride of caste is no less marked among Muslims. "Like the ideological domination over the other members of the Hindu Community by the 'upper caste Hindus', the persisteoce and elaboration of the functional castes among the Moslems, although Islam does not encourage any caste barrier, and the introduction of the dowry system in marriage among the wealthier Saiad Muslim in place of their traditional practice of ensuring the security of the bride through a mohar nama or bride-price, are two typical examples of acculturation into the Muslim Community from the 'upper caste Hindus'. The dowry system was deliberately introduced by many Muslims belonging to the upper class in order to be in par with the upper class Hindus."[7]

S. P. Adinarayan made an attempt to investigate the difference in the attitude to Harijans between Hindus and Muslims. He used the Bogardus Social Distance Test which gives a numerical index for measuring prejudice—a plus score indicating lack of prejudice and a minus score indicating the opposite. His subjects were 220 Hindu students, 70 Muslim students, 120 Hindu Professionals and 36 Muslim Professionals.

Here are the results:

Hindu Students	Plus 19·2
Muslim Students	Plus 1·2
Hindu Professionals	Plus 21·3
Muslim Professionals	Plus 9·9

"My findings seem to be directly opposed to the popular belief that Muslims have fewer caste prejudices. As far as students are concerned, Hindus score 18 points more than Muslims. A

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[7] Ram Krishna Mukherjee, *The Dynamics of a Rural Society*, 1957, p. 121.

similar high difference is found in favour of Hindus in the professional category also. Of late much thought has been given to the fate of the Harijan and perhaps the Hindu is making a conscious effort to be friendly towards him whereas the Muslim may be taking his catholicity for granted and hence putting it into operation ineffectively."[8]

Caste and the Christians

In his book, 'the Discovery of India', Jawaharlal Nehru says, "Christianity comes here (India) eighteen hundred years ago and settles down and gradually develops its own castes."[9] Christianity like Islam and unlike Hinduism does not believe in social gradations based upon birth and heredity. It does not take into consideration the food and marriage taboos which are the main planks of the Hindu Caste system. And yet, "something like the Caste group consciousness has developed within the Church also, creating group vested interests and power struggles within it and threatening the true sense of Christian fellowship. What we have within the Church is not the original caste grouping, but strange mixture of consciousness of cultural traditions, language, native place, social origin, regional loyalty and denominational background, with the sense of social origin dominant. It is in this way that Syrian Christians of Kerala, for instance, form a caste, the Nadars claim to be a separate Christian group as against the Vellalas in Tamilnad and the Malas differentiated from the Madigas in Andhra Pradesh.[10]

According to the recent census, the total Christian population of India comes just over nine millions out of which nearly one-third are living in the State of Kerala. The Kerala Christians are divided into a number of groups, the most important being Chaldean Syrians, Jacobite Syrians, Latin Catholics, Marthomite Syrians, Syrian Catholics and Protestants. Each of these groups tend to practise endogamy. Among the Catholics themselves the Syrian Romans and the Latin Romans generally do not intermarry. The Marthomites try to form a distinct endogamous group away from the Jacobites.

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[8] "Before and After Independence : A Study of Racial & Communal Attitudes in India", *The British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 44, 1953.

[9] J. L. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* p. 130.

[10] "Editorial", *Religion and Society*, Vol. V, No. 3, September 1958.

"The terms Caste and Christianity seem absolutely incompatible. But the average Indian Christian is a staunch observer of Caste rituals. There are a large number of Christians in the Southern districts of Madras State who even boast of their being firmer and truer adherents of caste system than the Hindus."[11] A Christian group met for consultation in Guntur in October 1958 to "survey the problems facing the Christian Community in Andhra Pradesh and define the main issues and a Christian approach to them in the light of the Christian understanding of State and Society." The Guntur Consultation Finding reported: "The caste feeling within the Christian Community has been somewhat overcome by the small minority of urban Christians but within the rural Christian Community, caste feelings are strong between Malas and Madigas, and between both these groups of Harijan Christians and Christians with a higher caste background."[12]

They recognised the following as some of the factors which foster the spirit of caste in the Christian Community:

(*i*) the existence of Caste from time immemorial as a hierarchical institution in India, and its adverse influence on reformist movements, both Christian and non-Christian;

(*ii*) the wooing of Christians belonging to different caste groups by rival castes and sometimes by rival political parties in the village;

(*iii*) the unhappy phenomenon of some educated Christians who make use of caste for purposes of election, instead of condemning it; and

(*iv*) denominational differences, which have reinforced caste distinctions in places where two or more denominations are present in the same village, Malas belonging predominantly to one denomination and Madigas to another.

Thus we find that the Christian Church is not free from caste prejudices in its own community life. Theoretically the practice of showing distinction of caste is admitted by everyone to be unchristian and yet the evil exists within the community. "At time of elections to Church committees, rival candidates who

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[11] N. Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

[12] "Guntur Consultation Findings", *Religion and Society*, September 1958, p. 81.

belong to different castes are set up and the whole procedure is tainted with the evil of caste-conscious attitudes. While posting pastors to parishes, church leaders responsible for such postings take into consideration the origin of the members of the parishes and those of the pastors."[13] Dr. Rajarigam observes, "In villages where all the Christians belong to one particular caste, there is no caste problem within the Community. But where there are inter-caste congregations, caste prejudices manifest themselves in many forms, subtle and otherwise. Whether one belongs to high or low caste, he is conscious of his origin and feels a loyalty to his caste group. He may feel a greater kinship with non-Christian members of the same caste than with the Christians outside his caste."[14]

Caste and the Sikhs

Nothing much need be written about the Sikhs as their social institutions do not differ vitally from the Hindus. Suffice it to say that Sikhism in the beginning was absolutely free from caste prejudices and any considerations of high or low in society. Free from the caste and social barriers of Hinduism, it immediately attracted the people of the lower castes who embraced it *en masse*. They felt relieved being rated on par with their co-religionists. "But after the downfall of Banda Bahadur, the forces of disintegration creeped in and befouled the whole system founded by the worthy Gurus. The same social evils, caste barriers and caste prejudices, from which the people of the so-called lower castes had tried to escape, were thrust upon them by their co-religionists who happened to be in the majority."[15]

The low-caste Sikhs are now termed as "Kamin Sikhs", "Rehtia Sikhs", "Mazhabi Sikhs", "Ramgarhia Sikhs", "Rai Sikhs", and so on. "The Sikhs who were casteless in the beginning are now a caste by themselves. Within the Sikhs, there are a number of gradations, very much similar to the Hindu Society, and, for all practical purposes, they function as exclusive, endogamous groups.[16]

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[13] Rajaiah Paul, *The Cross Over India*, 1952, p. 103.

[14] "Tamil Churches and Caste—A Historical Sketch", *Religion & Society*, September, 1958.

[15] *Link Weekly*, November 11, 1961.

[16] N. Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

Thus we find that the caste system is the typical Indian way of life to be found in almost all the communities in varying degrees and proportions. Caste in these communities has also been playing its role in politics. We have already referred to its entry into church politics. Another instance may be that of the Sikhs. At the beginning of this century Arya Samajists and Sikhs competed with each other in their proselytising zeal to absorb into their respective folds the Hindu Harijans who constituted about 20 per cent of the State's population. A substantial number of these were converted to Sikhism. After Independence many of them sought to return to Hinduism since they could not enjoy the benefits of being members of the Scheduled Castes unless they declared themselves as Hindus. Six years ago, Akalis launched a Morcha (agitation) and forced the Government to concede that the Sikh Harijans would enjoy the same concessions as are permissible to Hindu Harijans.

V

ANALOGOUS INSTITUTIONS IN OTHER SOCIETIES

Some stratification is prevalent in any society. This stratification tends to affect and influence political behaviour.

Although caste system as such is an exclusively Indian phenomenon, yet there are in various parts of the world analogous institutions which resemble caste in one or other of its aspects. It is not to be understood that there is any complete analogy to caste in any non-Indian society, but there are a number of social phenomena which offer a parallel to one or other element in the caste system. Thus in Siam, Furnivall[1] says, the Siamese, Chinese and Europeans have distinct economic functions, and live apart as separate social orders. Similarly in South Africa and in the United States there are white and coloured populations exhibiting a not dissimilar phenomenon, and in the French provinces of Canada, English and French Canadians grow up separated by race, language and religion in two distinct societies. "Even where there is no difference of creed or colour, a community may still have a plural character as in Western Canada, where people of different racial origin tend to live in distinct settlements and, for example, a northern European cannot find work on the railway, because this is reserved for 'dagoes', or 'wops'.[2] Clearly there is a social phenomenon in this which has much in common with the caste system.

A second analogy to caste, as pointed out by Risley,[3] is the racial analogy. He argues that wherever the conquest of one people by another has taken place, it has been followed by interbreeding and by an initial stage of hypergamy; that where the two people concerned are of the same race or at any rate of the same colour, the initial stage of hypergamy passes away and a stage of complete amalgamation follows. On the other hand, where marked distinctions of race and colour intervene, the

[1] *Netherlands India*, Chapter XIII, p. 7.
[2] J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 1961, p. 134.
[3] *People of India*, 1915, p. 270.

tendency is towards the formation of a class of half-breeds, the results of irregular unions between men of the higher race and women of the lower, who marry only among themselves and are, to all intents and purposes, a caste. An instance, he mentions the Southern States of the U.S.A., where Negroes intermarry with Negroes, and the various mixed races are absolutely cut off from legal unions with white races. By way of a precise Indian parallel, he refers to the 'Khas' of Nepal and the 'Dogras' of the Kangra Valley, similarly formed by alliances between Rajput and Brahmin immigrants and women of the country.

The analogy, however, fails in certain important particulars. It is true that the Negro in the Southern States has been, in many respects, kept segregated as a distinct community, prohibited or at least prevented from using the same public amenities as white men. "No realistic person would have thought of proposing anyone but an old stock white protestant for the Presidency or the Vice-Presidency of the United States. As for the average Negro, in either the North or the South, he was lucky to find a livelihood that kept him in ramshackle housing and grubby food...over the whole of minority America hung the aura of Caste."[4]

In 1960, the statistics showed that "only 6 per cent of the Negro students in the Southern and Border States were attending integrated schools—and the percentage was zero in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina."[5]

Statistics also offer a dramatic picture of how meagrely the Negroes share in American economy. "In 1939, the median income for white workers was $1,112 a year; for non-white workers, it was $460. In 1955, white workers had a median income of $ 3,896, contrasted with $2,342 for non-white workers. These figures make plain that while the non-white population has shared in our general prosperity and reduced the difference between incomes, the Negro nevertheless continues to pay a severe price solely because of the colour of his skin. Today two out of every five Negro families earn less than $2,000 a year. Average

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[4] K. Javits Jacob, *Discrimination, U. S. A.*, 1961, p. 6.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Negro incomes are still only 52 per cent as large as white incomes."[6]

Only recently U.S. Civil Rights Commission released a massive report on its two-year nationwide investigation into voting discrimination. The Commission reports : "There was reason to believe that Negro citizens are prevented, by outright discrimination or by fear of physical violence or economic reprisal from exercising the right to vote....Liberty County has 240 voting age Negroes but none are now registered. In 1956 some Negroes did register. There was an immediate outbreak of crossburnings, fire bombs, abusive night-time telephone calls. When all the Negroes, except one, had removed their names from voting lists, the troubles ended. The one defiant Negro was forced to leave the county."[7] All this proves that there is a strong prejudice on the part of the whites against the Negroes. "Powerful constraints work against Negro influence in Civic and political affair—race prejudice, class differences, geographic concentration, and a weak economic position—but a thorough enquiry into the course of specific civic issues in which Negro interests are involved strongly suggests that these external or environmental constraints are not sufficient to explain the lack of Negro effectiveness in the public life of the community."[8] Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that Negroes are not sufficiently effective in the public life of the community. However, the question of taboo and pollution by touch hardly arises. A Negro servant to a white man is no strange anomaly, but a Brahmin with a Chandal cook is unthinkable.

A somewhat similar parallel is to be found in Fiji, where there are chieftains each associated with his own clan and each at the same time an official at the court of the High Chief. Each clan has a specific function to perform in regard to the society of the whole group. "Obviously this hereditary functionalism does not constitute caste. But we do find cases in Africa in which taboos, associated with occupation, have

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[7] *Time : Asia Edition*, September, 15, 1961.

[8] Wilson, James, Q., *Negro Politics*, 1960, p. 6.

operated to prevent not merely intermarriage but any sexual relationship at all between pastoral and cultivating groups."[9]

An almost closer parallel to caste is to be found in the medieval practice of segregating tanners on account of their malodorous occupation. Medieval guilds, too, with their craft secrets and their hereditary nature offer an obvious parallel to the functional caste.

Some other analogies are to be found in Modern Africa. Thus among the Somali of the East Horn, there are certain out-caste classes.[10] One of these is that of the Blacksmiths—Tomal; another is the class known as Yebir, who are credited with supernatural powers and are able on the strength of that to levy tribute from Somali families on occasions of birth and marriage. The third are tanners and hunters, who are regarded as so unclean that marriage with them is tabooed and the Somali who breaks this taboo is degraded to the class of Tomal. Similarly among the Masai there is a despised tribe of hunters known as 'Wandorobo' and a completely tabooed class of Blacksmiths on which 'Wandorobo' as well as 'Masai' look down.

In the Ruanda and Urundi regions and the Belgian Congo a somewhat similar condition has been observed even more suggestive of Caste. Three racially and economically distinct groups occupy co-extensive areas—the pastoral Tussi, the Hutu, who are cultivators, and the Twa who are hunters. With the latter, neither Hutu nor Tussi will intermarry, though a Tussi is not absolutely barred from such relations with a Hutu.[11]

On the other side of Africa an analogy to caste is afforded by the Osu in Ibo society. Sexual relations of any sort between them and the free Ibo are tabooed. Their houses are segregated, and to call anyone an Osu is a gross insult.

An analogy to caste which is perhaps nearer to the essence of caste than any parallel elsewhere is to be seen in Burma. Under the old rule of the Burmese monarchy, seven distinct classes of out-castes were recognised. The most important of these was probably that of Pagoda slaves. A Pagoda is a slave

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[9] Roscoe, *Immigrants and their Influence in the Lake Region of Central Africa*, p. 34.

[10] J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 1951, p. 142.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

for life and his children and descendants are Pagoda slaves in perpetuum. They cannot be employed in any other capacity than that of Pagoda servant. The other six out-caste classes consisted of Professional Beggars; Executioners, Jailors and Police; Lepers and others suffering from incurable diseases; Deformed and mutilated persons; Coffin-makers; and Government slaves. Persons of these out-caste classes in Burma cannot enter a monastry nor become Buddhist Monks.[12]

These are thus a few instances of phenomena elsewhere that bear some resemblance to caste. There are many more such analogous institutions existing in various parts of the world. Caste complex is thus present to a certain degree all over the world. The Pegging Act and other such provisions excluding coloured people from white men's hotels and restaurants, relegating them to separate compartments in railways are manifestations of the same prejudices. However, the system as prevalent in India is a typical Indian institution and differs fundamentally, both in its extent and control, from any other similar system in the world. "For although social institutions that resemble caste in one respect or another are not difficult to find elsewhere, and some of them undoubtedly have some association with caste in their ultimate origin, yet caste in its fullest sense, caste, that is, as we know it in India, is an exclusively Indian phenomenon. No comparable institution to be seen elsewhere has anything like the complexity, elaboration and rigidity of caste in India."[13]

Most of these analogous institutions in other societies influence the political behaviour of their respective people but the evidence available is only impressionistic. The only evidence available is in the case of racial discrimination in various western countries, Negro prejudices in the United States and colour bar and the policy of apartheid of South Africa. All these institutions have vitally influenced the politics and political, economic, and social policies of these countries. The study of caste groups is but a particular aspect of the study of social stratification and social stratification is to be found in one form or another in almost all human societies. "The Hindu system is unique only in this

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

that it alone classified some groups as untouchables and unapproachables. In other respects it only differs in the thoroughness with which the scheme is worked out and in the number of differentiated groups."[14]

[14] G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, 1957, p. 165.

VI

MODERN MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CASTE

In the preceding pages we discussed the modern trends which are affecting the institution of caste and the changes they are bringing about in the traditional features of the system. The caste in the past had, by and large, tended to be negative, i.e., it emphasised the restrictive aspects with regard to the direction of the social behaviour of the members. The modern trends are making it more positive by forcing the members of the caste to come together and take collective action to preserve their identity. Today, therefore, caste seems to be more positive in its direction of the social behaviour of the members. Through its various recent manifestations it has come to exercise considerable pressure on the actions of the individuals to bring them in line with the requirements of the caste group as a whole. Thus, on the one hand caste has ceased to circumscribe the behaviour pattern of its members, but on the other, it has begun to impose certain positive obligations on them to act in a desired manner. These manifestations are now taken up for further discussion.

Caste Journals

The Lohana Hitechuchu, a Gujarati weekly issued by the committee of the Lohana Caste in Bombay, was perhaps the earliest regular journal started by a caste for the benefit and propaganda of its members. "Since 1914, when the Lohana Caste in Bombay published the Gujarati weekly Lohana Hitechuchu, 42 caste-journals have sprung up and they have been whipping up the caste spirit."[1] Chittrapur Saraswat Brahmins, a wealthy and influential caste of 18,900 concentrated in Bombay area is another "one of forty-two castes in India that operate regular Caste publications."[2] According to Ghurye, of the forty-two caste journals listed in Nefar Guide to Indian Publications in

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[1] B. K. Verma, "The Fight Against Casteism", *The Hindustan Times*, September 24, 1961.

[2] Selig S. Harrison, *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 103.

1956, only one belongs to a Bengali Caste. Seven of them are conducted by castes of Maharashtra and the remaining thirty-four by Gujarati Castes.[3]

The publication of caste-journals is thus a field of integrative activity with a very wide scope and appreciably potent in effect, arousing the caste solidarity among the members of their respective castes, particularly when this field is concerned with only the educated people.

Trade Unions

The insidious effect of the Caste is visible in Trade Unions also. A study of the Trade Union in a Mysore textile mill clearly indicated that the membership was based on Caste. People from upper castes being in clerical or supervisory position did not join the union as most of the workers were from the lower castes.[4] Gardner Murphy in his study of "Human Behaviour and Social Tensions in India" mentions that in Kanpur, Trade Unionism has made very little progress, largely because the different castes cannot pull together. In the same way, in Ahmedabad, "in spite of its effective Union supported and developed by Gandhi and by some members of the Sarabhai family, there is such poor cohesion that we find strong anti-Harijan feeling on the part of Caste Hindus."[5]

Caste has thus entered, as a non-unifying element, in the Trade Unions, making the bargaining power of the workers much weaker and industrial democracy a far off dream.

Caste Associations

The emergence of caste associations, which have become a central feature of Indian politics particularly at the State level, resembling in many ways the voluntary associations or other interest-groups familiar to European and American politics, is a very recent phenomenon in our country. It seems to be associated with the spread of communications and a market economy which created conditions under which local sub-castes could be linked together in geographically extended associations. The

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[3] Selig S. Harrison, *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 104.

[4] A. P. Barnabas, "Nationalism and Casteism", *Aikya*, October 1958.

[5] Gardner, Murphy, *In the Minds of Men*, 1955, p. 76.

building of roads all over India, and the introduction of railways, post and telegraphs, cheap paper and printing—especially in the regional languages—enabled castes to organise as they had never done before. A post card carried news of a caste meeting and the railway enabled members, scattered in far flung villages, to come together when necessary.

Another factor which gave a fillip to the growth of caste associations is the recent demarcation of political boundaries after the State's reorganisation. "While the boundaries (under the British) were mobile over a period of time, at any single moment, they constituted effective barriers between people living in different chiefdoms. Such a political system naturally imposed severe limits on the horizontal extension of caste ties. In short political frontiers determined the effective, if not the maximum, social space of each caste living within them."[6] A natural consequence of the territorial limits imposed by the earlier political system was the horizontal tendency of castes living in an area to co-operate with each other. Occupational specialization stressed this interdependence, as each caste was dependent for its livelihood on the work done by the other caste. Again, the fact that the members of a caste were all competitors for the goods and services offered by the other castes, meant that relations between the former involved conflict. This tendency of economic ties to cut across caste barriers was also supported by political and religious ties. The States' reorganisation, which aimed at bringing about the coincidence of the cultural and political frontiers, a principle explicitly recognised in the report of the States' Reorganisation Commission, was thus a new event in Indian history which enabled castes spread over a wide area to come together for economic and political ends. "Since modern means of transportation and communications have had the effect of broadening Caste, binding together local sub-castes which had been relatively autonomous into geographically extended associations, caste associations today usually parallel administrative and political units—States, districts, sub-districts and towns—whose offices and powers are the object of the caste associations' efforts."[7]

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[6] M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*, *op. cit.*

[7] L. I. Rudolph and S. H. Rudolph, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. XXX-III, No. 1, March, 1960.

Kula Kshatriyas Sangham began to press the Congress Party State Ministry for proportionate share in appointments to the services and elected bodies like the Municipal corporation, District boards and the State legislature. However, the Congress Ministry of Madras did not respond favourably to the Vanniya demand, nor did the nominating bodies of the Congress Party. From that time, the Vanniyas decided that they could rely only on themselves, dropped the attempt to work through the Congress or any other party and began to contest for public offices as independents. Their first major electoral efforts were exerted in District board elections in the districts where their greatest strength lay. In 1949, the Vanniyas did well in the district elections, capturing, for example, 22 of the 52 seats in South Arcot District Board. In 1951, with the prospect of 1952 elections before them, the Vanniyas convened a major conference and formed a political party called the Tamilnad Toilers Party. Subsequently the unified state-wide effort represented by the Conference, broke down. The Tamilnad Toilers as a party remained strong in South Arcot and Salem while the North Arcot rallied to a second caste party, the Common Weal Party.

At election time, the Caste Sabhas-cum-parties utilized the older village organisation, mobilizing Vanniya village leaders to assure solid caste voting for one or the other party. This mobilization device was effective because it defined the electoral issues in terms meaningful to an unsophisticated electorate. The Vanniyas secured 25 of the 190 seats in the legislature of post-1953 Madras, and secured two of the eight cabinet seats. With two ministers in the Cabinet and the cordial relations with Congress assured, the Common Weal and the Tamilnad Toiler parties were dissolved, their members joining the Congress. Till this day, Vanniya Kula Kshatriya Sangh plays an important role in Madras politics.

Other Manifestations

Among some other manifestations of the Caste are educational institutions, caste co-operatives, youth centres and clubs serving exclusively their own caste. Conferences are held reminding members of their caste loyalties.

With the extension of the principle of Democratic decentralization, elections to panchayats and other bodies of the scheme,

have provided to castes a new ground to match their strength. These elections invariably result in splitting the entire village society into two or more rival groups. "An analysis of the membership composition shows that the attempt in the Panchayats is to have representatives from each caste rather than selecting able members of the Community."[10]

[10] A. P. Barnabas, "Caste & Nationalism", *Aikya*, October, 1958.

VII

CASTE AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The strength of Caste in Indian political life is not the diffused strength of scattered local Caste groups. Well-organised caste lobbies function effectively over large areas which generally coincide with linguistic boundaries. Moreover with the increasing role of Caste in the political life of the Community, caste loyalties are taking the form of caste-communalism which is as dangerous as the religious communalism of the pre-Independence days. Also, higher Castes are generally economically well-off than the lower and this concentration of economic power along caste lines influences considerably the political behaviour of the people. In this section, it is proposed to study the relationship of Caste with region and language, the growing menace of caste communalism and also the effects of concentration of economic power along caste lines on the political life of the Community. The argument that the caste system is a bulwark of society against revolutionary assault has also been discussed towards the end of this section in the light of the system working as a handicap in the way of the organisation of a strong centralised national Communist Party in the country.

Caste and Region

Caste, because of its traditional restrictions, limits inter-dining and inter-marriage to an endogamous unit which may be confined to a single village or may spread across an entire region, but which is, in almost all cases, confined within linguistic limits. Hindu kinship organisation, writes Irawati Karve, follows roughly the linguistic boundary, which circumscribes "the widest area within which marital connections are established and outside of which kinship hardly ever extends."[1] The dominant caste grouping in each region draws to itself other groups, embracing them gradually in a network of common social practices. Karve cites the fact that in Maharashtra, nearly

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[1] *Kinship Organisation in India;* Deccan College Monograph Series, No. 11, Deccan College Post-Graduate & Research Inst., Poona, 1953, p. 1.

forty per cent of the total population consists of various inter-connected peasant-proprietor caste groups embraced by the terms Maratha and Kunbi. Around this Maratha-Kunbi group of castes can be placed other castes which imitate Maratha peculiarities, such as the Mali, the Navi, the Parit and the Mahar untouchables. Even some Brahman castes, such as the Deshastha Rigvedi Brahmans, have become closely associated with the Marathas as a result of their proximity in every day life.

The British anthropologist Eric J. Miller has demonstrated in a detailed case study of the Malayalam-speaking region that Caste was traditionally "a system of territorial segmentation" in which the bedrock unit was either the village or at the most the chiefdom. "The change from a closed to an open society, the old boundaries, dependent on political cleavages, now became porous, ceasing to mark the limits of social relations within the individual castes. This has enabled castes to establish internal bonds of solidarity over wide areas. The last fifty years have seen the growth of a formal regional organisation for practically every caste, with the avowed aim of...raising the status and prestige of the Caste as a whole and freeing its members from exploitation and victimization by other castes." [2] The increasing solidarity of castes over large geographical distance, observes Kingsley Davis,[3] has led in some ways to a strengthening of the caste spirit. "Where it once exercised social control at the level of functionally integrated villages, caste now reinforces economic and political conflict, which occurs for the most part within the same linguistic regional boundaries demarcating the newly extended caste alignment." [4]

Speaking about Kammas and Reddis of Andhra Pradesh, Srinivas says : "These two famous castes are concentrated in two different regions of Andhra —the Kammas in fertile deltaic Andhra and the Reddis in the Five Rayalaseema districts of West Andhra. This kind of relationship between a caste and

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[2] Eric J. Miller, "Caste and Territory in Malabar", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 56, No. 3, June, 1954, pp. 418-19.

[3] *The Population of India and Pakistan*, 1951, p. 175.

[4] Selig, S. Harrison, *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 101.

a region is widespread in India and it should be noted that regional claims are often only a disguise for caste claims. The conferring of vast powers on panchayats, which is a widespread feature of modern Indian administration, will only place great temptations before the locally dominant caste, to use the money and power, in favour of its members and at the expense of the other and dependent castes."[5] Explaining the circumstances for the polarisation of Kamma-Reddi warfare on a Communist-Congress basis, Selig Harrison says, "The consensus in Andhra points to geographical accident, the Kammas happened to be in Delta. There, political activity of every stripe had always been greater than in Rayalaseema. From the beginning of the independence movement Gandhian Congress leaders found their liveliest Andhra response in the delta rice trading towns of Vijayawada and Guntur, centres of the region's intellectual and political ferment. Thus just as the then Brahman-dominated Congress drew its leadership from the delta, so the challenge to this leadership emerged within the strongest non-Brahman Caste group in the delta.[6]

Karl Deutsch writes, "Men discover sooner or later that they can advance their interests in the competitive game of politics and economics by forming coalitions...coalitions which will depend to a significant degree on social communication and on the culture patterns and personality structure of the participants."[7] Thus the regional limits of the operative caste unit render it inevitable that caste setting as it does restrict the social boundaries of the competition for economic and political power will always be a serious divisive force.

Caste and Language

The balance of power between castes in a multilingual political unit with its many caste groups differs radically from that in the smaller unilingual unit. This can be seen in Andhra, where two rival Telugu peasant-proprietor castes, the Kammas

[5] M. N. Srinivas, "Caste in Modern India", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, 1957.

[6] Selig S. Harrison, "Caste and the Andhra Communists", *American Political Science Review*, June, 1956.

[7] See Sashadhar Sinha, "Some Dangers of Disunity", *The Statesman*, January 26, 1957, p. 10.

and Reddis, have kept the state in political upheaval since its formation in 1953. R. Velayudhan, a scheduled caste member of Parliament, expressing his view on the conjunction between Caste and language, declared in 1953 that the linguistic idea "is a dangerous idea, from the very cardinal point of view of the future social structure of India. Unlike Europe, here the one fundamental basis was the caste social structure. And if the States are now redistributed on the basis of language alone, it is really the caste idea which is behind it."[8] On another occasion, Velayudhan branded the formation of linguistic states, "a great danger...a reactionary move which will result in bringing the caste system back into the country in a ferocious form."[9] Before the separation of Andhra from multi-lingual Madras State, the Kamma and Reddis were lost in the welter of castes. Now in Andhra, they face each other as titans.[10] "Caste has played so fundamental a role during this period that this examination becomes in effect a case history in the impact of caste, on India's representative institutions," writes Selig S. Harrison in his study of the Caste and the Andhra Communists.[11] In Maharashtra also, there is a fierce political struggle among the major regional caste groups—the Marathi Brahmans, the Maratha peasant-proprietors and the Mohar untouchables. "All along in various ways, caste has exerted an important, though at times subtle, effect on the Congress Organisation in Maharahstra. It was always, and still, is, something to be reckoned with, in spite of protestations to the contrary."[12] B. R. Ambedkar, the late Law Minister, warned on many occasions against Maratha subjugation of the Maharas in a linguistically-defined Maharashtra. "In our country, linguism is only another name for communalism. Take Andhra ; there are two major communities spread over the linguistic area. They are either the Reddis or the Kammas. They hold all the land, all the

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[8] *House of the People, Proceedings*, August 19, 1953, *Debate on the Andhra State Bill, Cols.*, 1090-91.

[9] *House of the People Proceedings, February 17, 1953, Debate on motion on Address by the President, Col.* 438.

[10] Selig S. Harrison, *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 106.

[11] American Political Science Review, June 1956, pp. 378-404.

[12] Maureal L. P. Patterson, *Caste and Pol. Leadership in Maharashtra.*

offices, all the business. The untouchables live in a subordinate dependence on them. Take Maharashtra. The Marathas are a huge majority in every village in Maharashtra. In a linguistic State what would remain for the smaller communities to look to."[13] Dr. Ambedkar thus warned that in a linguistically defined Maharashtra, the Marathas, as the dominant community, will become sole heir to all political power of the area.

The strength of Caste in Indian political life is not the diffused strength of scattered local caste factions. "It is because caste lobbies function coherently on the basis of entire linguistic regions—for all their potential division, even the Marathas are a relatively unified lobby—that caste assumes such irrepressible importance. United blocks in a state party machine demand their share of the spoils, when the party comes to power."[14]

Caste conflict over whether a linguistic State should be formed, very clearly exposed the possible effects of linguistic reorganisation on the caste power balance in Mysore and Karnatak areas. There is a serious conflict between two powerful, predominantly peasant-proprietor sub-castes within non-Brahman ranks, the Lingayats and Vakkiligas. "The two communities ruling the political roost, Lingayats and the Vakkiligas, far from shedding the label of 'backwardness', are vying with each other to retain it by various kinds of subtle subterfuges, so that they could appropriate the political, administrative and educational plums going with the label. This only indicates the depth to which casteism has corrupted the public life of the State."[15] According to Harrison, the transition of the Lingayats from a loose sectarian alliance of sub-caste groups into a unified regional force seeking to enhance its position through linguistic reorganization may typify the solidification of regional caste consciousness in other parts of India.[16]

D. R. Mankekar, Editor, The Times of India, once wrote,

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[13] B. R. Ambedkar, "Linguistic States—Need for Checks & Balances", *The Times of India*, April, 23, 1953.

[14] Selig S. Harrison, *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 109.

[15] Andre Beteille, "Politics of Caste", *The Indian Express*, 22nd August, 1961.

[16] India : *The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 112.

"thus we find once again, on lifting the linguistic cloak, casteism and love of office grinning at us."[17]

Caste and Communalism

There seems to be an inherent tendency in the caste system to develop into communalism. In pre-Independence days communalism was associated with religion. Religious groups set themselves as separate political entities and sought to work for power and position in the State. Such communalism has now weakened to a considerable extent with the acceptance of the ideal of the secular State, though at times its ugly signs are visible in the form of communal riots of the type we had at Jabalpore, Aligarh and certain other towns of U.P. some years ago and in certain areas of Assam, East Bengal and Orissa more recently. However, after Independence, the trend has been towards a new sort of group-consciousness based upon caste loyalties and it is quite evident that caste communalism is as dangerous as religious communalism. It also results in separatism and vested interests. Each group talks of safeguarding its rights and privileges; individuals in the group come to believe that only in securing the interests of their group that they are secure. The tragic part of it is that such communalism is not so much interested in self-development in the context of freedom for all to have such opportunity. Rather, it is based on a class selfishness which would want to grow at the expense of the other, to expand as a group by exploiting other groups, to assume powers of leadership in order to subjugate and enfeeble other groups. Thus, casteism is a threat to the wholeness of national being and prevents the growth of national unity. In addition to anti-Hindu or anti-Muslim demonstrations which at times take the form of fierce communal riots we now also see anti-Brahmin movement taking the same ugly shape. Anti-Brahminism assumed a violent form in the riots which occurred in Kolhapur and elsewhere following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Anti-Brahmin demonstrations, the looting and burning of Brahmin houses, printing presses, factories and shops were widespread. The only reason perhaps could be that the Brahman-owned and edited Marathi press had been critical of Mahatma

[17] *The Times of India*, June 29, 1955.

Gandhi for some time before his assassination. A. B. Lathe, one of the leaders of non-Brahmin movement and who in 1925 insisted on Communal electorates, pondering over the Coyajee report on Kolhapur riots of 1948 remarked : "As an humble friend of the non-Brahmin movement of thirty years ago, I still think the movement was essentially justified but later on it degenerated into naked communalism of several non-Brahmin communities which ultimately broke it up....The vicarious punishment of all Brahmins for the sins of a few among them is foolish and hatred of one community against another is suicidal to democracy. The days of caste oligarchies have gone and cannot and ought not to be revived. Those in the State who encourage narrow communal pride...are the worst enemies of the people and the State."[18]

Anti-Brahmin Movement in the South

Because of historical factors, both ancient and modern, not Community but Caste has been the bane of the public life more particularly in South India. There was a time when Brahmin community dominated the public life throughout South India. Right up to the beginning of the First World War, the Brahmins dominated the administration and the liberal professions everywhere in peninsular India excepting Kerala. It is alleged that during the period of Brahmanical domination, favouritism towards Brahmins and discrimination against non-Brahmins were both widespread. In order to break the Brahmin monopoly, the Justice or non-Brahmin party came into existence in the early twenties. There was something inevitable in this development as with the legislatures becoming more and more representative of the people, a dominant minority was bound to lose its position. But unfortunately, with the disappearance of this domination, the caste spirit has not disappeared. Rather, the majority having come into its own, it has now passed to the stage of persecuting the once-dominant minority.

The non-Brahmin movement in peninsular India is over a century old and is, at present, composed of two kindred groups, the Dravida Kazagham and the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham. For more than twenty years since 1922, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker,

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[18] *The Times of India*, November 1, 1958.

popularly known as Periyar or Great Sage, led the anti-Brahmin Justice Party's parliamentary efforts for non-Brahmin representation in Government and Schools. By 1945, however, he decided to set up a more militant mass organisation, the Dravida Kazagham. Periyar maintained that the non-Brahmins in Tamilnad, constituting as they do 97 per cent of the population, should not be called "non-Brahmins" at all but should have a positive identity as members of a Dravidian nation entitled to sovereign independence from the Indian Union. On the eve of Indian Independence he warned that "we must guard against a transference of power from the British to the Aryans."[19] Members were enjoined to sign a pledge to support separation from the Indian Union.

Periyar's popularity suffered a severe blow in 1949 when, at the age of 72, he married a 28-year-old girl, providing a pretext for his ambitious lieutenant, C. N. Annadurai, to secede with his followers to organise the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham. "Today Annadurai is the dynamic force in the Dravidian movement. Although a member of the Mudaliar caste, he deliberately gives his movement a proletarian flavour, orienting his appeal not to such prosperous non-Brahmin Communities as his own or the Vellala landowners (commonly known by their title of Pillai), Communities that had been Periyar's mainstay, but even more to the non-Brahmin masses—the rank and file Nadars, Maravars, and Adi-Dravida untouchables. Annadurai's admirers exaggerate when they call him "the Dravidian Mao" but there is no doubt that this powerful orator is the single most popular mass figure in the region."[20] To quote Harrison once again, "the fact that the Dravidian movement is essentially a social protest of the Tamil masses against Brahmins and even elite non-Brahmins at the top of the Caste hierarchy makes it no less serviceable as a channel for protest against alleged north-Indian economic imperialism. Indeed, as an alliance of aggrieved Tamil castes, the Dravidian movement typifies the political potential of regional caste groups united behind a catch-all slogan against a 'foreign' scapegoat. In the case of the Tamil non-Brahmans, the intruders who impinge on the domain of

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[19] Selig S. Harrison, *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 123.

[20] *The Hindu*, February 11, 1946, p. 4.

the true indigenous inhabitants of the region are the Brahmans—an Aryan fifth Columnist—and the Northern trader. Both symbolize the cosmopolitan elements of a Hindu social order in which regional sub-castes hold a strong sense of their own local interests and identity."[21] The Dravidians, charges A. S. Venu, confront a new Indian imperialism with two forces: "A peculiar combination of the Brahman and the Bania, of orthodoxy and avarice, of Manu and the Mammon."[22]

Writing about the "Bane of Casteism in the South", the Hindustan Times Special Correspondent reported, "The two most powerful weapons in the hands of the D. M. K. are language and the cinema. Language teachers throughout the State are immersed in the Kazhagam ideology and they are doing everything to poison the minds of the younger generation.

"How has the Congress sought to fight this? The D. M. K. is not being dealt with as a party preaching treason but in a manner which gives direct encouragement to it to persist in its campaign. If the party is allowed full freedom to carry on its activities, as at present, a time may come sooner than later when the Congress will find that its position has been completely undermined."[23] In fact in the recent general elections, the D. M. K. has captured a considerable number of seats, both in the State Legislatures as well as in the Union Parliament. Its increasing strength should be a source of worry to every patriotic Indian national.

M. S. A. Rao points out that "the conflict not only hinges on the polarisation of Brahmin and non-Brahmin Castes, but also on the cleavage of upper and lower non-Brahmin castes. The Ramanathapuram riots provide an example of violent conflicts between the Harijans and the Upper Castes."[24]

M. N. Srinivas is of the opinion that "the absence of powerful Brahman groups in the North has prevented the rising of an anti-Brahman movement and this has probably led to the popular impression that caste is more powerful South of the Vindhyas than to the North. There are signs, however, that caste is becoming stronger in the North. Whether caste conflict will

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[21] *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, pp. 124.
[22] Venu A. S., *Dravidasthan*, Kalai Manram, Madras, 1954, p. 20.
[23] *The Hindustan Times*, August 21, 1961.
[24] M. S. A. Rao, "Present Day Growth" *Seminar*, August, 1961.

M. M. Mehta points out, industrial and financial power is concentrated in a few hands in the private sector and "a few leading families control and guide the industrial destinies of the country. Fresh and young blood seldom finds opportunity to enter the closely preserved and well organised industrial oligarchy."[30] Positions of leadership and managerial importance are, by and large, held by those related to the owners or managing agents by caste, kin or community regardless of ability or aptitude. Although business knowledge and experience may be passed on within particular caste and kin group, the inherent qualities of leadership and personnel management are unlikely to be the monopoly of a few castes.

"In addition to the large-scale industrial power of well-known Marwari entrepreneurs such as G. D. Birla, says Selig Harrison, "Marwari money lenders wield widely diffused power in far flung villages and provincial towns. This peculiarly cosmopolitan economic position and the supra-regional social position that it reflects is an unusually sensitive political factor in the Indian setting."[31] In her case study of the Tamil Village, Kumbapettai,[32] Gough found that Brahman landowners had sold out one-third of the village land in the past twenty years; as a result 37% of all non-Brahman caste Hindus in the village no longer depend for their subsistence on Brahman landowners, and 78% of the Adi-Dravida untouchables no longer work as tied labourers for payment in kind." "Once off the land, the enterprising leadership in such communities quickly makes itself felt in economic and political life." At another place Gough observes: "It is important to notice that the people who oppose the traditional village system are not those, who suffer most acutely under it, but those who have partly extricated themselves from it through some change in their economic circumstances. It is not, for example, the very poor Konar tenants in Kumbapettai who support the anti-Brahman Dravida Kazhagam movement, but rather the somewhat wealthier and more independent "Up-Starts" of the two new streets, and to a much larger extent, the

[30] M. M. Mehta, *Structure of Indian Industries*, 1955.

[31] *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 114.

[32] Kathleen Gough, *The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village*, Indian Villages (Ed.) Srinivas, M. N., p. 90.

new independent non-Brahman landlords of neighbouring villages, who resent the orthodox Brahman's unwillingness to treat them as his ritual equals."[33] Thus, from all this account we find that there is strong correlation between caste, economic power and the resultant political behaviour.

Caste and communism

Many thoughtful Indians are strongly in favour of the caste system on the ground that it is a bulwark of society against revolutionary assault. The following extract from O'Malley's book, 'Indian Caste Customs' is very revealing in this context: "In the past it (Caste system) has helped to save Hindu culture from destruction. Through successive conquests and revolutions it has been a stable force, and its stabilising influence is not without political importance at the present time, when the Communist movement is said to be a menace to India. A system which is permeated by religion is utterly opposed to the Bolshevist doctrine of a war upon religion. The idea of a class war is alien to the people who believe that the social hierarchy is divinely ordained and that equality is not only contrary to experience but is impossible because each man's stage of life is predetermined by his actions in past lives."[34] The peculiarly integral position of Caste in Hindu Society makes the organisation of a centralised national Communist party a task unique in international Communist experience. "Probably Marx, even Lenin or Mao, would have wilted in the Indian climate," editorialised the Lucknow National Herald on the occasion of Nambudripad's statement in 1953 that the C.P.I. would suit its Marxism to Indian conditions.[35] "The inchoateness of the class situation, the indeterminate, the undefined intermediate forces which are largely British made, the peculiarly hard social structure defy analysis." If Hindu Caste corresponded neatly to economic gradations, one caste per gradation, it might be argued that the Indian social structure provided exceptional opportunities for classic Marxist exploitation. But class and caste do not in fact necessarily coincide. More often than

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[34] L. S. S. O'Malley, *Indian Caste Customs*, Cambridge University Press, 1932, pp. 180-81.

[35] "Marx in India", *The National Herald*, Lucknow, January 5, 1954.

not there will be more than one sub-caste unit within each economic gradation. In the northwest U. P. district of Bijnor, a case study by Selig Harrison found the rural population divided into three major caste alignments: Jats 18 per cent of the district; Chauhans 16 per cent; both peasant proprietors, as well as various grades of outcaste or semi-outcaste communities, 30 per cent. According to Harrison, "Communist organising tactics must take into account the cleavage between the rival Jats and Chauhans, who would for the most part be classified together as middle peasants in conventional communist terms but who are in fact entities socially and politically distinct.[36] Again to quote Harrison, "The Communists, in short, recognise that the landed peasant is a source of great strength to the Congress, as well as to some of their own regional organisations, and they hope to meet the Congress on its own ground on a national scale. In pursuing this hope, however, they are neither building a 'revolutionary' instrument of India's most numerous proletariats, the landless untouchables, nor are they 'battering down' the walls of the Hindu Social structure any more now than in the past."[37] India's social landscape bends all parties to its contours, and the communists are no exception.

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[36] *India : The Most Dangerous Decades*, 1960, p. 270.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

VIII

VESTED INTEREST IN BACKWARDNESS

"Mahatma Gandhi could never have foreseen a time", wrote the Editor of the Statesman, "when backwardness, instead of being a disability, would become a description that sections of the Indian population would choose and struggle for. Yet this is what is happening, and (among others) the sociologist Dr. M. N. Srinivas has done well to suggest that it is high time to ask whether we as a country can afford to handicap, if not penalize, ability and character in favour of non-rational criteria?"[1] There are about 15 crores of people in India belonging to the Backward classes. About two-fifths of the Backward classes belong to the scheduled castes, a little less than one-fifth to the Scheduled Tribes, nearly two-fifths to the other Backward classes, and the remainder to the Denotified Tribes.[2] The Mysore Backward Classes Committee (1961) noted : "The general demand put forward by almost every community was that it was extremely backward and that therefore it should be included in the list of backward classes."[3] Indeed in many states of South India, particularly Mysore, we witness the fantastic spectacle of competition to be included in backward classes with a vested interest, having developed in being "backward", as they become entitled to certain important privileges. The reactions which followed the publication of the Report of the Mysore Backward Classes Committee, popularly called the Nagan Gowda Committee, are important indicators to the involvement of Caste in politics. The Report had originally excluded the powerful Lingayat Caste from the category of backward classes. This was immediately followed by intense political campaigning by the Lingayats leading within a very short time to their also being included as "backward".

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[1] *The Statesman*, August 31, 1961.

[2] Leela Dushkin, "Special Treatment Policy", "*The Economic Weekly*, October 28, 1961, p. 1665.

[3] Quoted from "Origins of Backward Classes Movement in India", M. N. Srinivas, *The Statesman*, October 10, 1961.

Neither of the two Communities in Mysore State, Lingayats and Vakkiligas, can now truthfully claim to be politically, economically or educationally backward as a class and yet they want to cling to the privileges conferred by the label. "In theory the notification of some classes as 'backward' was supposed to serve the purpose of the Governments, Central and in the States, taking special steps to bring up under-privileged sections of the Community to the economic and social levels of the more advanced. In practice, there has been a veritable competition among castes and sub-castes to be listed as 'Backward'. The result is that what was intended to be a means of protection of the rights of weak minority groups has in effect come to be a tool of aggrandisement in the hands of politically dominant because of numerically large caste groups in many states."[4] Repeated efforts by the Centre to devise a workable set of criteria for drawing up an all-India list of 'Backward Classes' have thus far proved unsuccessful. At present, the State lists continue to be used. These vary widely, having been drawn up over the years in response to the particular conditions and political pressures of the States concerned. In U. P., for instance, backward classes include, in effect every caste which does not have twice-born status. In Mysore, everybody belongs to one of the Backward classes except the Brahmans.

There are two basic types of special treatment to these classes; expenditures and reservations. The first includes grants, loans and other concessions involving Government expenditure, from free bullocks to housing loans. The second is adopted mainly for political representation and employment with Government. It is also used, at times, for such things as admissions to academic institutions, land allotments, etc. Reservations are also of two main types. In politics, the reserved seats cannot be held by anyone else as long as reservation lasts. In Government jobs and academic admissions, reservation usually operates within that group of candidates which has attained the minimum prescribed qualifications but does not score high enough to be selected on merit.

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[4] Andre Beteille, "Politics of Caste", *The Indian Express*, 22nd August, 1961.

"India is unique in that nowhere else is so large an under-privileged minority granted so much special treatment as this country."[5] Unfortunately, caste concessions have built a vested interest in their own survival. In Mysore, for instance, the important non-Brahman Castes developed the technique of capturing government jobs and securing other important concessions on the plea that they were 'Backward'. Because these advantages had to be secured through parliamentary means, the leading dominant castes set about organising themselves as successful pressure groups. The concessions thus gained in their turn helped the castes which were numerically stronger and better organised to enhance their political power. Claims to 'backwardness' and political power thus reinforce each other. The Lingayats of Mysore owe their political power, in part at least, to the concessions they have acquired as a 'Backward' Community; they continue to enjoy the concessions accorded to 'Backward' Communities because of their political power. "That it is only natural for the beneficiaries to want them to continue does not lessen the obvious dangers to public standards and to Harijan self-reliance and self-respect, if this now officially sponsored form of caste nepotism is allowed to become firmly established."[6]

The Chairman of the Backward Classes Commission appointed in 1953, which released its report in 1956, Kaka Kalelkar reveals in his introductory letter to the report that the competition in backwardness gave him a "rude shock"...which ..."drove me to the conclusion that the remedies we suggested were worse than the evil we were out to combat."

Moreover all the members of the 'Backward' Communities do not always deserve the patronage they are officially entitled to receive. Some of them are indeed persons of wealth, social influence and political power. And these are precisely the people who know best how to take advantage of the benefits conferred on their community as a whole. According to Srinivas, "States

[5] Leela Dushkin, "Special Treatment Policy", *The Economic Weekly*, October 28, 1961, p. 1067.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 1068.

claim to be backward, regions within States complain of neglect, and castes vie with each other to be classified as 'backward', and more 'backward'. One need not be too cynic to note that claims to backwardness are stressed only to gain concessions and privileges."[7]

[7] M. N. Srinivas, *Changing Values and Attitudes in India Today—Seminar on Trends of Change in Village India*, Central Institute of Study & Research in Community Development, Mussoorie, November, 1961.

IX

CASTE AND ELECTIONS

The major political parties in our country have always declared that they desire to work for a socialistic pattern of society which would be possible only with the breaking up or the withering away of caste. The idea of economic and social development through planning is accepted by almost all political parties in the country which also generally rejects caste consideration, except in so far as it is necessary to give reality to the concept of equality through measures of justice to raise the status of and to provide opportunities of growth for the depressed Castes. However, in practical politics almost all parties exploit caste feelings of the electorate and treat the Caste as the most potent vote-catching device. Even the Congress Party with its secular ideology is blamed of being caste-ridden. "Admittedly the Congress is the most-caste-ridden of all the political parties in the country", writes the Times of India Correspondent, "whose factions always revolve round personalities and Castes. It selects its electoral candidates, ministers and even judges on the basis of caste, shows caste preferences in almost all appointments and wherever he can, a minister tries to show favours to his own castemen. The Central leadership of the Congress has not done much to cleanse the party of its casteist ulcers; on the contrary it recognises caste group, negotiates with them and appeals to them to maintain unity. The groups go back from Delhi to their respective States fully satisfied and resume their casteist intrigues with greater energy."[1] The very fact that these charges are levelled indicates that they are not entirely baseless. Whatever is true of the Congress is equally true of other political parties which, by and large, do not otherwise have any strong footing in terms of policy, programme and organisation. They have all the more reason to exploit the caste allegiance of the masses.

Speaking about the role of Caste in Indian elections, Jayaprakash Narayan once remarked, "Parliamentary democracy

[1] *The Times of India*, 25th August, 1961.

assumes that the voters understand the programmes and policies of different parties and cast their votes understandingly. But, if this happened, let us say, to the extent of 20% during 1952 Elections, it probably happened to the extent of only 10% during the last 1957 elections. Caste played a much bigger role in the last general elections than it ever did. Nobody is concerned with what the various parties are saying, what their programme is, what their policy is. Everyone is concerned with what is the caste of the candidate. This may be less in one part of the country and more in another, but it is true; and it is growing."[2] Having felt the increasing role of caste in elections, Mr. Jaspat Ray Kapoor, a member of the Congress Party, proposed an amendment to a clause in the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha requiring a candidate for election to declare at the time of his nomination that he was not a member of any political organisation bearing a Caste or Communal name or restricting its membership to one Caste, Community or religion.[3] The amendment was, however, lost since it was feared that such legislation would create a difficulty since the Constitution gave a special position to backward classes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

The use of Caste in the Andhra election of 1955 was so blatant that the Times of India came out with a leading article contrasting this behaviour of the Congress High Command with its prompt action in appointing a Committee after the Avadi session of the Organisation to suggest measures for the elimination of caste basis.[4]

In a penetrating article on 'Caste and Politics in Maharashtra',[5] Miss Maureen Patterson analysed the forces of Caste underlying politics in Maharashtra. Talking about the Congress victory and severe defeat of the non-Brahman candidates in 1936-37 elections, Miss Patterson says that Congress was able to attract Marathas and other non-Brahmins into its fold partly because its leader Mahatma Gandhi was not a Brahmin. In her opinion,

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[2] *Towards a New Society*, 1958, p. 86.

[3] *The Times of India*, May 24, 1956.

[4] *Ibid.*, March 8, 1955.

[5] "Caste and Political Leadership in Maharashtra—A Review & Current Appraisal", *The Economic Weekly*, September 25, 1954.

all along in various ways Caste has exerted an important, though at times subtle effect on the Congress organisation in Maharashtra. It was always, and still is, something to be reckoned with, in spite of protestations to the contrary'.

Mr. Selig Harrison in a paper entitled, 'Caste and the Andhra Communists'[6] made an analysis of the forces at work in the politics of Andhra State. According to Harrison, "A comparative analysis spanning three elections in Andhra shows that Communist success has depended primarily on the effective manipulation of social tensions. In Andhra, these tensions have been two-fold; the rivalry between two rising peasant-proprietor caste groups and the struggle of all Andhra, a Telugu-speaking region of 20,507,807 people to win linguistic identity as a separate province within the Indian Union. Communist candidates have won their margins of victory most often when they have been able to exploit allegiance to caste and to language region." Caste has played so fundamental a role in Andhra in the recent years that a study of its political affairs becomes in effect a case history in the impact of Caste on India's representative institutions. While the Kammas dominate the Communist Party, the rival landowning caste of Reddis dominates the Congress. Kamma-Reddi rivalry is an old affair and the present-day political competition between them "is only a modern recurrence of an historic pattern, dating back to the 14th century."[7] In 1951 elections the Kammas put their funds, influence and votes behind the Communist Kamma candidates. This factor, "appears to have tipped the scales in the delta—the share of Kamma support won by the Communists provided the margin of victory in 14 of the 25 delta general constituencies, where Communist deputies were elected."[8] The Kamma influence is so evenly spread over the delta that even in those deltaic constituencies where non-Kamma Communists were successful, Kamma support was probably extended. In the 1955 elections, according to Harrison, Congress sent one of their ablest organisers, Shri S. K. Patil, to organise the Congress to defeat the Communists at the polls. "Patil matched caste with caste in the choice of

[6] *American Political Science Review*, July, 1956.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 382.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 395.

candidates, and this ensured that the Communist candidate did not have the advantage of caste against the Congress rival."[9]

It is to be regretted that analysis of elections similar to Mr. Harrison's are not available for other parts of India. But some idea of the forces at work in 1951-52 elections could be obtained even from newspaper reports. In an article entitled 'The National Scene' in the Times of India of July 12, 1955 'Darem' wrote: "But it is futile denying that a large majority of the people (which means the non-Brahman majority) in Tamilnad sympathise with the Kazhagam's ideology. Indeed the present Chief Minister of Madras (Shri K. Kamaraj) owes his return to the Assembly to the support of the Kazhagam in elections." In the same report the Times of India Correspondent remarked that "the Scheduled Caste Federation was very powerful in Madras and the Harijans, constituted as they were of landless labourers and other impoverished sections of the Community, were attracted to the extreme left in thousands. The poor Christians, mostly converts from Harijan Castes, were also supporting the Communists, though in their case, there was the counter influence of the church to the Right."

In the 1951 elections, the major cleavage in Travancore-Cochin was between Hindus and Christians. For a whole year before the elections, the Democratic Congress carried on a steady and virulent campaign that the local Congress Party was dominated by Christians. This led to the departure of some Nairs and Tiyyars from the Congress. Then came a sudden electoral alliance between the local Congress and the Democratic Congress which confused many followers of the respective parties, a large majority of whom turned left. The Christian vote did not go to the Congress because the State Government tried to obtain control of tuitions in schools, which are mostly run by Christian missionaries. The Clergy and the Catholic Congressmen supported independent Catholics against the Congress nominees. When Hindus saw that the clergy were breaking Catholic candidates, they voted against the Catholic nominees of the Congress and supported Hindu Independents and Leftists. The Congress vote was thus split and Communist candidates gained out of it.

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 395.

Strong caste rivalries were also seen in the Bihar Congress during 1952 and 1957 elections. The three chief castes were the Rajputs, the Bhumihars and the Kayasths. Rajputs supported Bhumihars, occasionally in contravention of Party loyalty. "The Congress exploited the principle of Caste in the elections. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was brought to tour the tribal areas to wean away tribesmen, a good many of whom are Christians, from a separatist demand for a tribal state, to be called Jharkhand."[10]

In the Punjab, the conflict was not between castes but between two systems of Castes—the Hindu and Sikh. The Hindu-Sikh Conflict took on the guise of a linguistic conflict but a political compromise between the Congress and the Akali Dal led to a overwhelming Congress victory at the polls.

Caste and the Third General Elections

The campaigning for the third general elections, held in February 1962, as in earlier elections, was conducted at two levels. There was a direct appeal to the voter from the writing and in the election manifesto. But more significant was the effort to reduce his interests and resentments by using the undercurrents of caste and sectional affiliation. What was promised in the manifesto had very often no relation to the principles, if any, with which a party was associated. Thus "Strengthen Parliamentary Institutions", "Extend Democracy", "Enforce Fundamental Rights", were strange as it may seem, the slogans used in the election manifesto of the Communist Party. The startling announcement that "the concept of a national sector will be put forward and every individual and authority will be expected to contribute his best towards the establishment, ownership and management of industry" was made not by a party committed to the nationalisation of the means of production but by the Jan Sangh. In the bewilderment caused by pronouncements of this kind, it was not surprising that the voter often found a safe anchorage only in the familiar loyalties of caste and Community. The candidates had to introduce the caste factor in election Campaigns, for to many of them the issue to be decided at the polls was not a matter of policies or pro-

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[0] M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India, op. cit.*

grammes but of individual prestige. Victory justified everything and if a particular contestant was magnanimous not to think so, his party certainly considered him a political innocent and an electoral risk. Almost throughout the country, Caste played a dominant role in election campaigns and very often materially affected the election results. In Bihar, a most caste-ridden State, whether it was the Congress or the Communist Party, Swatantra or the Jan Sangh, P. S. P. or the Socialist Party or even an independent candidate, no one was free from exploiting the caste sentiment. Though every party appeared to condemn casteism publicly, in private and particularly in the door-to-door vote-catching campaign, vote on a caste basis was solicited. Disturbances were reported from the Sasrama (Shaabad) reserved Parliamentary Constituency where Railway Minister Jagjivan Ram, was contesting against Mr. Agnibhoji (Swatantra). Some of the Minister's workers were hit with missiles by some high caste Rajputs. Reports of terrorisation of Harijans with a view to intimidating them to voting against Mr. Jagjivan Ram were also received.[11] In Muzaffarpur District, in one of the Assembly Constituencies, the State Irrigation Minister, Mr. Deep Narain Singh, found in Mr. K. P. Sinha, Communist Leader, a formidable rival. Although a Congressman was pitted against a Communist and the fight should have been mostly on ideological basis, caste sentiment was a notable factor in the contest as Mr. Singh was a Rajput and Mr. Sinha, a Bhumihar Brahmin.[12] In Sahibaganj Assembly Constituency there was considerable tension because of caste feeling. The Congress candidate, Mr. Navalkishore Sinha, was a Bhumihar and the PSP Candidate, Mr. Shiv Saran Singh, was a Rajput. In Lalganj Assembly Constituency, where a senior State Minister, Mr. Birchand Patel, was fighting against Mr. Bishandev Yadav, an influential rebel Congressman, caste loyalties came much into play as both, the Minister and the rebel Congressman, though belonging to the backward classes, came from different professional sub-castes. These are thus some of the instances of the role of castes in Bihar general elections.

In Andhra also, party programmes had little to do with the

[11] *The Hindustan Times*, dated 16th February, 1962, p. 7.
[12] *Ibid.*

outcome of the polls in the State. It was mostly a matter of caste, sub-caste and (connected with these two) village feuds. Mr. Koneru Rangarao, who was a Communist till August, 1961, was the Jan Sangh candidate to the Lok Sabha from the Gudivada constituency. So strong was the undertone of Caste that the Swatantra and Communist parties had chivalrously stood down in favour of Mr. K. Raghuramaiah, Union Deputy Defence Minister. Whether the Communists were extending to Mr. Raghuramaiah the support given to his Chief by the Party in North Bombay was not known but for local people the basic fact was that it was a strong Kamma area, where the opposition candidate was non-Kamma.

In Vellore, the sitting M.P., a Harijan leader of the Republican Party, contested a general seat since 30 per cent of the electorate there were Harijans. Similarly Congress put up Mr. Wahid, an influential Muslim merchant, since 15 per cent of the electorate were Muslims.

Writing about third general elections in Andhra and the importance of Caste, the Hindustan Times Correspondent remarked, "Andhra politics is enlivened and bedevilled at the same time by the 'Great Divide' of the State, arising out of the sectional ambitions and rivalries of the two largest Communal groups, the Kammas and the Kapus. As a rough indicator, non-Brahmin Andhras, who bear the suffix "Rao" or "Iah" are Kammas and the Kapus (who claim Rajput descent) include the influential Reddys. There are innumerable other castes and tribes, Gondas, Yerukulas, Vanniyas and Harijans, who are sub-divided into Char-makaras, Malas and other tongue-twisting groups. Any Andhra candidate who did not work out the political possibilities emerging from the permutations and combinations of these caste and kinship groups would be of no use to any political party.[13]

Coming to Delhi, the Capital of the country and one of the most representative cities with its population drawn from all over the country, caste formed an important factor in electioneering. In outer Delhi, for instance, the Communist Candidate, Mr. Baldev Singh, and an independent, Mr. Lakhi Ram, split the

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[13] *The Hindustan Times*, dated 13th February, 1962.

Jat and Gujar votes which normally would have been polled by the Congress. A large number of Jats in Mehrauli area of this constituency voted for Mr. Singh. Mr. Brahm Parkash, Congress candidate, who is an Ahir, was not liked by the Jats, though most of the Gujars supported him. He, however, got most of the Sikh and Muslim votes.[14] A Statesman Staff Reporter, after a visit to Bijwasan Village in the constituency remarked, "The elders, all Jats, were angry with Mr. Brahm Parkash, an Ahir, because, they said, he had got his own Community included among the Backward classes but not the Jats. The Children of the Ahirs got free education now, but the Jats had to pay for it. Those who could not had to withdraw their children from school. Ahirs will now go up and up and we shall be left behind,"[15] they said. To quote the same Staff Reporter again, "When I talked to them of their vote, their faces lit up and they explained to me with patience whom they would vote for and why. None of them knew whether the parties in the field had issued any manifestoes or plans that they would implement, if elected. But they knew what castes the candidates belonged to and what village they came from. They were also quite clear in their minds, what good or harm had been done to them as a Community or as farmers by the candidates concerned or their parties."

In Chandni Chowk Parliamentary Constituency of Delhi, Mr. Sham Nath, the Congress candidate's main source of strength were the 40,000 Muslim votes. The Jan Sangh, because of its ideology, was not able to catch any Muslim votes. On the other hand, Mr. Amrit Lal, the Jan Sangh candidate, being a Jain, was banking upon Jain votes as 38 per cent of the traders there are Jains.[16] In Karol Bagh Constituency, Jan Sangh set up Mr. Shiv Narain as a candidate who belonged to Reghar Community as Reghars constituted nearly 40 per cent of the 50,000 Scheduled Caste votes in the Area.[17] The Republican Candidate, Mr. Ganga Ram, on the other hand, got the solid support of the Khatik and Jatia Communities.

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[14] *The Hindustan Times*, dated 17th February, 1962.
[15] *The Statesman*, Calcutta, dated 12th February, 1962.
[16] *The Hindustan Times*, February 17, 1962.
[17] *Ibid.*, February 16, 1962.

In Delhi Sadar Parliamentary Constituency also, all the candidates attempted to woo the voters on the basis of the Caste or Community to which they belonged. The Hindustan Times Staff Correspondent reported, "Talking today to voters in the Constituency, which has a total of 2,32,000 voters, I found that many have already decided to vote for either a "Bania" or a Refugee candidate. Political or local issues have had little bearing on their decision.[18]

In Punjab, particularly in the Hariana Area, caste played a very significant role in the elections. Mr. Devi Lal, till recently vice-President of the Pradesh Congress because of his insistence to get the party ticket for Fetahabad Constituency, a Jat-Majority area, left the Congress only to fight the official Congress nominee from the same Constituency. With the support of Jats almost throughout Hariana, he managed to get many Congress Candidates defeated which resulted in the election of many independent Jat Candidates. "In this caste-ridden region, Jats, though the biggest single group are nowhere in a majority. This has weighed with the parties in sponsoring not only their candidates but also "extras" from the same caste as that of the most serious in order to "divide and benefit". Hence, the bewildering multiplicity of contestants and the difficulty in spotting winners from among them. The Congress bases its strategy on due recognition of the role of non-Jats—a point that is reflected in the choice of its candidates."[19]

While making an analysis of election trends in U.P., Special Correspondent of the Hindustan Times remarked, "When the din and dust of battle settles down 24 hours before the polling day and people have had a chance of taking stock of the situation and making up their minds, it will, in a large majority of cases, be the Caste and Community of its candidates that will decide the fate of the election, especially in the rural areas, because it is on that basis that all the parties, without a single exception, have selected their candidates.[20] In Jaunpur Vidhan Sabha Constituency, for instance, there was a grim election tussle between State Finance Minister Hargovind Singh and Jan Sangh leader

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[18] *Ibid.*, February 15, 1962.
[19] *The Hindustan Times*, February 7, 1962. p. 7.
[20] *Ibid.*, February 14, 1962.

Yadavendra Dutt Dube. Caste and Communal considerations were dominant. "While Muslim and Thakur votes are expected to go en bloc to Mr. Hargovind Singh, those of Brahmins and other High-Caste Hindus are expected to fall for Mr. Dube and will almost completely offset them. The balance is held by Harijans and their leanings are unknown as they are afraid to speak out their minds."[21] In Hapur Constituency, elections were fought more on caste and community basis than on political and local issues. Muslim and Harijan votes were ultimately deciding factor. In Dasna constituency also, which is dominated by the Rajput Community, Mr. Megnath Singh who contested as an independent after resigning from the Congress, was fully supported by the Rajput Community to which Mr. Singh belonged.[22] In Meerut City Constituency also, Caste was a dominant factor. The refugee Harijan labourers and other backward classes who form the bulk of voters seem to be more inclined towards the Congress candidates.[23] Reports of caste-election relationship are also available from Madhya Pradesh. For instance, it was reported that Congress set up a wrong candidate, Mr. Babulal, Congress M.P. from Khandwa, for the Harsud Assembly seat. While there was Mr. Prem Chand Jain, Jan Sangh, to share the non-Rajput votes, majority of the Rajput votes were sure to be cast for a candidate of their own community, Mr. Bhim Singh, P.S.P. backed Swatantra candidate.[24]

In Rajasthan, the success of Swatantra can be attributed to a significant extent to the caste factor, as majority of the Swatantra candidates were Rajput Jagirdars and the Rajputs form the majority in this state. Moreover, bifurcation of double-member constituencies also resulted in a disintegration of Harijan votes which in the past largely belonged to the Congress. Also, with the introduction of Panchayati raj, the compact bloc of Jat votes suffered a break-up and affected the results of the election in certain areas.[25]

These are, thus, some of the instances of caste playing a

[21] *The Hindustan Times*, February 16, 1962.
[22] *Ibid.*, February 18, 1962.
[33] *Ibid.*, February 14, 1962.
[24] *Ibid.*, February 7, 1962.
[25] *The Hindustan Times*, February 5, 1962.

predominant role in elections. In fact caste-support is the rule and the contests without involving the caste-factor are only the exceptions. Commenting on the Congress party which is the largest and the most powerful party in India and has as its basis a secular ideology, Mr. Charles Wheeler, a B.B.C. Correspondent in India and Pakistan observed, "In most of the Indian States the party (Congress) has split into several rival groups, with cliques and cliques within cliques jockeying for power and snapping at the fruits of office. Their quarrels have nothing to do with ideology; they are either personal or about linguistic and parochial interests or about caste."[26] The politicians in India, howsoever sincerely they may desire caste and communal distinctions to disappear are at the same time aware of their vote-catching power and are thus faced with a real dilemma. As average citizens' primary loyalty is not to the country, but rather to his caste and community, it is no accident that every political party takes into account the communal and caste composition of the electorate while nominating its candidates for a particular constituency.

Voting along caste lines further strengthens caste consciousness as the successful candidate is expected to champion the interests of his caste. If, for instance, his caste had been classified some time ago as a backward caste, the candidate is expected to fight for the continuance of its backward status, for backwardness entitles it to certain privileges and concessions. Every State Cabinet has one or more members from each dominant caste and they are expected to be their spokesmen. The Ministers have to meet these sectional demands in order to maintain their popularity and power. It is, therefore, an undeniable fact that unless secular minded political parties unitedly attack communalism and casteism, democratic institutions in India will remain weak and elections will have no meaning.

[26] "India's General Elections", *The Listner*, January 18, 1962.

X

CASTE, ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY AND EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

Writing about increased railway accidents, Touchstone remarked, 'There are today ugly whispers of deteriorating morale among railwaymen as a direct result of some of the staff policies planned and pursued at the highest level. The reservation of 15 per cent of promotions to the Scheduled Castes, in particular, is held to be responsible for extensive heartburning and discontent. Although 15 per cent may seem only a fraction, it is evident that for everyone who is promoted purely on a caste basis there may be ten or more who feel that their merit had been unjustly ignored. If a number of such cases of preferential treatment takes place it is conceivable that the consequence will be the creation of a very considerable army of disgruntled and demoralized officials who can be a serious liability to the Administration.[1] According to Srinivas, "successful execution of the Plans requires an honest, efficient and dedicated bureaucracy, which is absent in many States. More important efforts should be made to develop rational habits of thinking among the people; and the present system of giving preference to members of the backward castes is not calculated to do that."[2]

Not only in the matter of appointments to Government posts that recognition is given to caste but even in medical and engineering colleges seats are reserved for certain communities. In Mysore, for instance, Brahmans may apply for only one in five posts and only 30 per cent of the seats in medical and engineering colleges are allotted on the basis of merit. It may be recalled in this connection that Article 29(2) of the Constitution of India guaranteeing that "No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them" was amended in 1951 to provide for

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[1] *The Hindustan Times*, November 16, 1961, p. 7.

[2] M. N. Srinivas, "Origins of Backward Classes Movement in India", *The Statesman*, October 10, 1961.

reservation of seats in schools and colleges on the ground of caste. The Constitution (First Amendment) Act was passed in 1951 and added the following to Article 15 of the Constitution:

> "Nothing in this Article or Clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially or educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

The Amendment Act arose out of the case of Champakan Dorairajan *vs.* the State of Madras. Miss Dorairajan, a Brahman girl, was refused admission to a college in Madras and she filed a writ petition in the Madras High Court. The court held that Communal Government Order under which the action was taken was ultra vires of the Constitution. The Madras Government appealed to the Supreme Court which upheld the decision of the Madras High Court. The Amendment of the Constitution was thus prompted by the decision of the Supreme Court. To quote Hindustan Times Correspondent, "When the Communal G.O. of Madras was held unconstitutional, the Congress leadership should have welcomed it. Instead, it amended Article 15 of the Constitution and invited the State to revive the castist system for distribution of Government posts and seats in Colleges. This invitation has been gleefully accepted by the States which have had only to change the label of their G.O.s from Communal G.O. to Backward Classes G.O.[3]

The ten-year period of reservations of legislative seats and Government posts came to a close in 1960. Yet it was given a further lease of life of another ten years. The Railway Ministry on its part has stretched the principle of reservation even to promotions. 'The effect of all these as of the backward class G.O.s is to encourage the different sections of the population to think in terms of their being separate entities and to turn this status into a vested interest.'[4]

In this context a distinction must be drawn between the Scheduled Castes and Tribes on the one hand and the Backward Classes on the other. The decision to accord preferential treatment to

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[3] *The Hindustan Times*, August 25, 1961, Art. on 'National Disintegration', p. 6.

[4] *Ibid.*

the former was perhaps justified in the circumstances in which it was taken. These communities constituted minorities which had suffered social oppression for generations and were really at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. The motives behind their upliftment were largely humanitarian. But the concessions progressively granted to a wide variety of Castes by labelling them as Backward cannot always be explained in purely humanitarian terms. There can be little doubt that in at least a number of cases political pressures have been equally important. This is proved by the Lingayats, a very powerfully organised caste of Mysore, who have been able to force their way into the "privileged" category of Backward Classes.

It is interesting to note that whereas, the problem of deciding as to which Communities should be listed under Scheduled Castes and Tribes is handled by the Centre, matters relating to the Backward Classes are left in the hands of the States. 'Perhaps it is realised that the Scheduled Castes and Tribes are not strong enough to hold their own ground in State politics.'[5]

The reservation of posts on the basis of caste is bound to result in a lowering of standards. When a person is more or less assured of a position because he belongs to a particular Caste, he is naturally inclined to put in less than his best. Moreover, a candidate who is more able and efficient is often by-passed because he does not belong to the right caste. This not only leads to decline in standards but is also against the principles of social justice. The recent Supreme Court judgment striking down the Mysore Government's Order reserving 68% of seats in the State's medical and engineering colleges to backward classes and tribes as a fraud on the Constitution should receive serious consideration not merely at the State but at the union level also. The Mysore Government has been a persistent defaulter in this respect and has been issuing order after order in defiance of the spirit of the constitution and the Orders of the Judiciary. The idea behind Article 15(4) which provides that, notwithstanding the provisions against discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, special provision may be made by the State for the advancement of socially and educationally

[5] Andre Beteille, "Politics of Caste", *The Indian Express*, 22nd August, 1961.

backward classes of citizens and for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, was that any special provisions for bringing these classes to the level of others should not be challenged either by the score of discrimination or because they are a restriction on the fundamental rights of other citizens. "To use this provision, however, to nullify the mandate about non-discrimination or the fundamental rights of the citizens will clearly be an abuse of the powers vested in the State Governments by the Constitution. And this is exactly what the Mysore Government has been doing."[6] In 1958, the Mysore Government promulgated an order that all Communities, excepting the Brahmins fell within the definition of educationally and socially backward classes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes and provided for them 75% reservation in educational institutions. The order was struck down by the Mysore High Court. In 1959, two separate orders were passed and all communities excepting Brahmins, Banias and Kayasths among Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Jains were classified as backward and 65% of seats were reserved for them. These orders were also quashed by the High Court, except as regards the reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. In 1960 again a fourth order was passed reserving 50 per cent for the "reserving pool" of whom 22 per cent was for backward classes. The High Court held that the provisions of that in favour of other backward classes in excess of 22 per cent amounted to an unreasonable restraint on the fundamental rights of other citizens and was, therefore, void.

Ignoring these strictures, the Mysore Government came out with another order in 1962 reserving 50 per cent for backward classes, including 22 per cent for what were described as more backward classes, the reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes remaining as before at 15 per cent and 3 per cent. The net result was that only 32 per cent was left for open competition by other classes. "If for nothing else, the Mysore Government has to be given credit for perseverance. Four times it tried to inject some of the virus of its caste dominated politics into the State's educational system by regulating admissions to engineering and medical colleges on the basis of caste. Each time the attempt was foiled by the Courts. Not deterred, the Government for the

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[6] *The Hindustan Times*, October 10, 1962.

fifth time promulgated a regulation earlier this year reserving 68 per cent of the seats in these institutions, for certain communities, classified as backward and more backward, in addition to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Again, the regulation has been struck down, this time by the Supreme Court, Mr. Justice Gajendragadkar declaring that it was a fraud on the Constitution."[7]

The Supreme Court has pointed out that the backwardness referred to in Article 15(4) must be both "social and educational" and not "either social or educational" and the citizens to whom the section is to apply have been referred to as, "classes of citizens" and not "as castes". Hence to make caste the sole criterion of backwardness, is to disregard the provision in the Constitution. Under cover of Article 15(4) which justifies special provisions for the socially and educationally backward, the Mysore Government has actually sought to extend special advantages to 90% of the State's population, perpetrating what amounts to an act of discrimination against the rest of the population of the State. This, the judgement has said, could certainly not have been the intention of the framers of the Constitution. Apart from pointing out the internal inconsistencies in the Mysore order which vitiated it, the Supreme Court has laid down the considerations that should weigh with the State in determining "socially and educationally backward classes", as envisaged in Article 15(4) of the Constitution. It has also declared that the permissive provisions of this class should not be interpreted in such a way as to violate the basic principle of non-discrimination enjoined by Article 15(1). The Court recognised the legitimacy, in the public interest, of making special provisions for the benefit of weaker sections of society. At the same time the Court urged that it would be "a fraud on the Constitution" to give such a wide recognition to the special provision as to nullify the rights to others excluded from the special benefits. "It would be extremely unreasonable to assume", according to the Supreme Court, "that in enacting Article 15(4) Parliament intended to provide that where the advancement of the backward classes or the Scheduled Castes and Tribes was concerned, the fundamental rights of the citi-

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[7] Editorial, *The Hindustan Times*, October 1, 1962.

zens constituting the rest of the society were to be completely and absolutely ignored."

The judgement made another important point. It said that what was true of Article 15(4) was equally true of Article 16(4) which provided for reservations in services. "There can be no doubt that the Constitution makers assumed as they were entitled to, that while making adequate reservation under Article 16(4), care would be taken not to provide for unreasonable, excessive or extravagant reservation, for that would, by eliminating general competition in a large field and by creating widespread dissatisfaction amongst the employees, materially affect efficiency." "Therefore", the judgement added, "like the special provision improperly made under Article 15(4), reservations made under Article 16(4) beyond the permissible and legitimate limits would be liable to be challenged as a fraud on the Constitution."

The judgement thus clearly indicates that judicial opinion at least, if not political opinion, is trying to come to grips with the anachronism that being included in "Backward list" has become a vested interest and also with the paradox that the principle of special reservation in education and services can completely disregard the concept of merit and economic conditions. Also this approach tends to lower the sense of responsibility among the beneficiaries of these concessions. It is also felt that apart from reservations, other dubious devices have been adopted by the State Governments to secure the same objective whether in the matter of recruitment to services or admissions to higher educational institutions. "Apart from open reservations, committees for recruitment or admissions are so constituted that caste discrimination is practised in a more insidious way. Thus concessions provided for raising the more backward sections of the populations are sought to be utilised to pull down the more advanced communities and deny them opportunities for higher education and public service."[8]

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[8] *The Hindustan Times*, October 10, 1962.

XI

CONCLUSION

The attempt in this study has been to examine whether the socio-economic and political changes which are often a direct consequence of the policies pursued by the government have brought about any changes in the caste system. A general feeling that the caste system is disrupting and it is only a matter of time before it completely disappears prevails among certain sections of the Indian society.

The present study suggests that the caste system has withstood the changes which could have disrupted it and that the caste feelings and prejudices are still a force to be reckoned with. The caste feelings pervade not only among the Hindus, as is generally believed, but the whole of Indian society.

The caste system has been able to withstand the onslaughts due to many reasons. In the past the role of Caste has generally tended to be restrictive and hence negative. At present the trend is for the caste to become a positive force in its direction of the behaviour of the members particularly in socio-political areas. The caste organisations are tending to spread to wider regions, though generally confined to linguistic areas. The ability to widen their sphere of influence over a larger area has contributed to the persistence of the caste feelings. Concentration of economic power along caste lines has had repurcussions on the political attitudes and behaviour. Caste communalism is the result of a greater group consciousness based on indrawn caste loyalties. Caste communalism is as dangerous as religious communalism. In peninsular India, the non-Brahmin majority having come into its own has now started persecuting the once dominant Brahmin minority. The desire to dominate or to resist dominance has also brought the members of a caste closer together.

The political parties have exploited the caste feelings of the electorate as it is one of the most potent vote catching devices. Reservation on the basis of caste not only in matters of recruitment but also promotions in public services and even admission

to institutions has affected the morale of the administration and the society adversely. The attempt to atone for the injustice perpetuated on the lower caste in times past has in effect become a tool of aggrandisement in the hands of the numerically large and hence politically dominant caste groups in majority of the states. Caste groups thus seem to be the chief means by which democratic politics operate in the Indian Society.

One may legitimately deplore the persistence or the increase of caste communalism. However, many problems have to be resolved before caste feelings can be lessened. The caste group does provide a sense of security and a sense of belonging to the individual. Can an alternative be provided which would fulfil these needs of the individual?

In every society there are groups to which individuals have an affinity. These groups might be interest groups, religious groups, professional groups or political groups. In the Indian society the Caste was an already existing group (which combined all these aspects) to which the individual had an affinity. The tendency among the caste members in the context of rapid social change which seem to affect most aspects of their life is to be more indrawn to provide themselves with some sense of stability. The phenomena of ingroup and outgroup is relevant in every society and affinity to an ingroup is natural. The question is what "groups" can replace the caste group which would provide a sense of stability to the individual?

It has been suggested that caste loyalties affect political behaviour and caste feelings are exploited by political parties. The political parties naturally want to spot the winners. As caste affinity and loyalty exists, the tendency for parties is to select candidates from those castes which have, if not a majority, at least, a substantive number of members. Should the political parties be blamed for trying to select possible winners? Representation of the people is one of the basic principles of democracy. If a member of the majority caste is elected, is it not in a way in keeping with this principle? It might even be suggested that the majority group is likely to have a larger number of more eligible candidates. These questions must be seriously considered and dealt with. Casteism cannot be mitigated by

avoiding the awkward questions that crop up if one analyses it in a realistic way.

Reference has been made to the "vested" interest in "backwardness". Casteism is perpetuated because of the privileges which are given to the so-called backward classes. While on the one hand, the Indian Constitution says that there should be no discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, creed or race, on the other hand, it also provides for the bestowing of special benefits upon "certain castes". These two provisions are in a way incompatible. Social justice requires that the underprivileged be helped to raise their level of living. Unfortunately the underprivileged has been defined in terms of castes. The provision in the Constitution is thus being made use of by groups which are already privileged and are able to use pressure tactics to gain greater benefits for themselves. This paradox has to be resolved so as to reduce casteism.

The caste provides the affinity of an ingroup. Political parties recognise and exploit the caste sentiments and feelings. The incompatible provisions in the Constitution in a way encourage the perpetuation of casteism. Unless these problems are dealt with in a courageous and imaginative way, the evil of casteism is likely to persist for over a long period of time.

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